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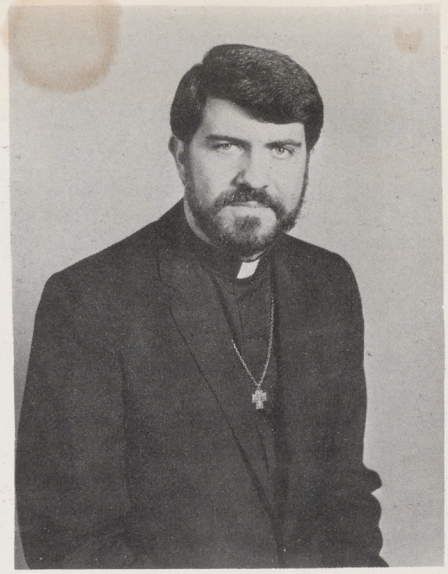
CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION



Christian = God's
Social = People
Action = Changing the World

A message from the Reverend Elder Troy D. Perry

Last year at the Sixth Annual General Conference of our Fellowship, I preached a sermon on Christian Social Action. I reminded the delegates attending the Conference of the importance of all of us being involved in bringing about change in the national life of each nation where there is oppression of gay people.

Much to my chagrin, it has been brought home again to me how homophobic many people still are in the place of my birth, America.

A letter had just arrived in the Fellowship Office from the Y.M.C.A. Camp of the Rockies informing us that they are cancelling our use of their facilities for the 1977 General Conference because we are too "controversial." (Blacks were also controversial in the early 50's.)

I am sure that most of you have read by now, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision about state laws and gay people. The decision is a serious setback, but not a death-blow to the gay movement.

The Court ruled on March 29 that it would not hear arguments in a case that came to it from a Virginia District Court, noting simply that the lower court decision was being affirmed. The lower court had ruled, in a challenge to Virginia's anti-sodomy law, that the state has the right to make such laws. The Court thus rules that states may make laws governing the private sexual behavior of consenting adults.

There are a number of important points that we must keep in mind about this decision:

1) The Supreme Court did *not* outlaw homosexuality! All the Court did was to rule that the states have the right to do so, if they wish. According to the Constitution, the states have the right to legislate on any area not covered by federal law. Since there is no body of federal legislation dealing with the consenting adult sexual activity, the states have the inherent right to pass such laws. It must clearly be stated that the Court has thus also ruled that the individual states have the right to pass pro-gay legislation and to repeal sodomy laws already on their books, as 14 states already have done. This is a states' rights decision, not an anti-gay one.

2) A very broad group of people is affected by the Supreme Court ruling, a group not limited to homosexuals. In effect, the Court has ruled that the states may make laws affecting any sex acts that do not conform to the standard "missionary position" in heterosexual activity. It is not essentially anti-gay, (though two Richmond gay men initiated the case) since sodomy is not an exclusively homosexual act, nor is it the only homosexual act. This is a ruling against everybody.

3) By upholding the State of Virginia's right to make such a law, the Supreme Court has upheld, we believe, a state's right to make laws which abridge the right of privacy. Clearly, it is a basic precept of our democratic system that every individual has the right to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion in her or his private life. The right to privacy is explicitly outlined in the Constitution. Thus, many of us in the UFMCC believe the Court decision to be a serious mistake.

4) Fourteen states have no restrictions on consensual sex acts between adults, while the remaining 36 still do. It is important, in the light of this ruling, to redouble, as gay people, our efforts to get pro-gay legislation passed on the state and local level. All gay people have a stake in this effort.

5) In additon, we individual gay people, must redouble our efforts to get federal legislation passed through the United States Congress. The Supreme Court has ruled that states may make such

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INSIDE IN UNITY

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION
By Richard Mickley

In a sermon, "Afraid of the Journey," at MCC's General Conference in Dallas, July 29, 1975, the Rev. Jay Deacon said, "MCC is an Exodus church. The story of Exodus is probably the most important in the Hebrew Bible. It begins with the people setting off on a trip and later wondering what they did that *for. They followed Moses because he represented something that was very much part of them: their aspirations, their hopes, the possibilities that lie within them."*

But, he explained, in time they forgot where they were going. "All they could think about was where they were coming from. But every new turn in their journey taught them more about the awesome Presence they felt.

"Nothing could ever be the same again. But they tried to make it the same. They were tired and afraid. The old familiar way was easier.

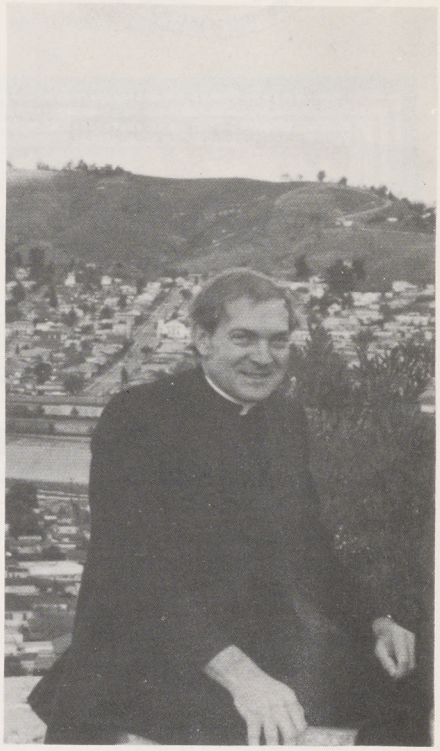
"And we are an exodus church. Our presence in the world means hope. For some it will be frightening, for it means that nothing can ever be the same again."

The future holds a hope for all oppressed peoples. "Our s is an exodus from exile, to a new world, to a new kind of consciousness, to broadening circles of the rejected and the despised who must be included in love, human solidarity, and liberation."

"We cannot stay where we are, if we are alive to the promise of the new land, if we are not afraid of the journey..."

This issue of IN UNITY focuses on the theme of Christian Social Action.

MCC is embarked on a journey. MCC is not the Kingdom, but what MCC does must be on the way to the Kingdom where all live relieved of oppression.



Robert McAffee Brown, in a speech before the World Council of Churches (quoted in this issue of IN UNITY), says that the forms of oppression in our society "such as racism and sexism are enslaving to those on whom they are imposed and to those who do the imposing... There is a convergence today between the Biblical view of Jesus as Liberator, and the cry of oppressed peoples for liberation."

Another writer, Carl F. Henry, writes, "Evangelical Christians today are interested in the social dimensions of the gospel as they have not been for almost a century." This statement from an evangelical publication, **World Vision** *(April 1976) emphasizes two of the greatest needs of human beings: social and spiritual liberation. There are crying social needs which call for the involvement of Christians who know the deepest need of the human being is fulfillment in the abundant life offered by Jesus Christ. Two billion fellow human beings do not yet know Christ and even as we face this statistic, we know that only Christ redeems and rescues from ultimate disaster.*

"No century seems ever to have faced such multiplied human crises as ours...."

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IN UNITY

The News and Opinion Journal
of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Volume VI, Number 3 April/May 1976

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> You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.
>
> You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. Matthew 22:37

Christian Social Action

By Terry "spider" Luton

Terry "Spider" Luton of Los Angeles was appointed Chairperson of the Christian Social Action Commission by the Board of Elders at their March meeting.

The Commission was brought into existence at the 1975 General Conference in Dallas. There had been Social Action Committees in the past, but they were not on-going as a Commission is.

The Committee has held workshops at previous General Conferences and was responsible for the idea of Affirmation '76 in connection with the 1976 General Conference in Washington, D.C.

The Commission structure is organized to engage in general works of Christian Social Action. In addition, under the commission are two special area committees. The Committee on Racism and the Committee on Human Awareness. The Committee on Human Awareness has two Task Forces, the Task Force on Women and the Task Force on Men.

In taking over as Chairperson, "Spider" told IN UNITY, "Here's my idea of Christian Social Action: It is the duty of the Christian to eradicate oppression in any form. That covers a wide range of injustices in our society."

Luton hopes to have contact with persons in each congregation of the Fellowship. These people will be aware of areas of concern for Christian social action and work with their local congregations on Christian social action projects.

"I feel the importance of the Social Action Commission is paramount," Luton said. "The way I came back to Christ was through the desire to see laws changed so that I had a right to exist. Fortunately, by coming to MCC, I found a much greater liberation in Christ.

"I'd like anybody in the Fellowship who has ideas for input into the work of the Commission to write to me."

Correspondence in reference to the Christian Social Action Commission should be sent to Terry Luton, Box 36277, Los Angeles, California 90036. •

As chairperson of the Christian Social Action Commission, I will from time to time report on the workings of the Commission through the medium of IN UNITY.

I am sending out letters to all our Churches, Missions and Study Groups, requesting that a liaison person be appointed from each congregation to keep in touch with the Commission.

We will be seeking information pertaining to the laws covering social action from country to country, state to state, and province to province. We will be seeking the best methods of liberating God's children where the need arises. We will be trying (through communication) to eradicate prejudice wherever it exists, be it inside or outside our Churches, whether it is toward the color of one's skin, the age or condition of a person, the sex or the sexuality of a person.

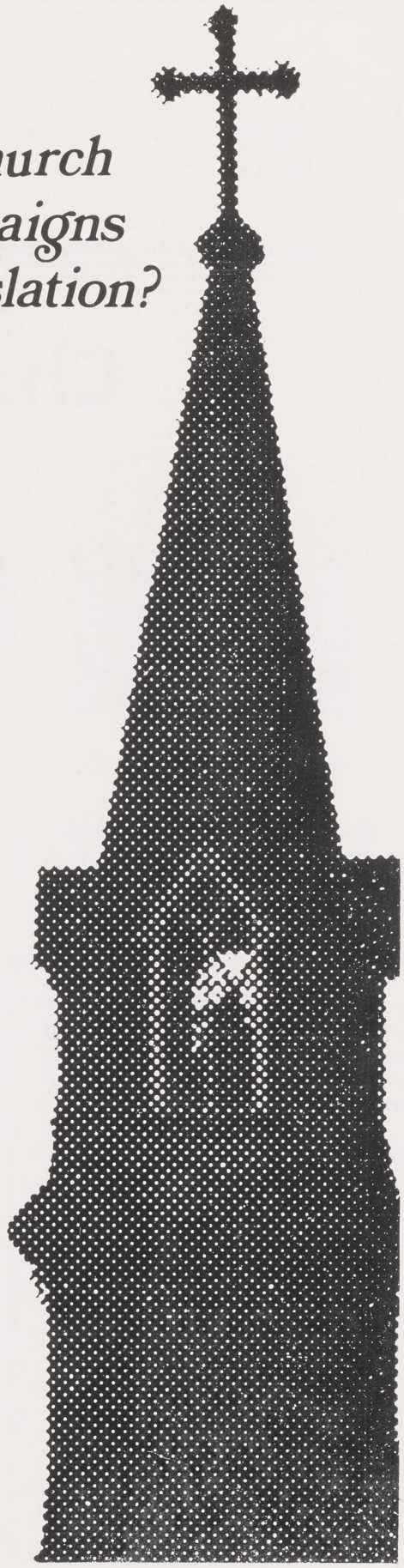
God loves each and every one of us and rightfully expects us to do the same. As long as problems of oppression or injustice exists, it is our duty to help in any way we can.

I know there are people in the Fellowship that believe Christian social action has no business in the Church. I believe that it is the business of the Church *to love God and each other.*

Rev. Sandmire delivered a wonderful sermon recently that covered the Ten Commandments, point by point. Then he said that they were negative in context and he wanted to leave us with a positive note. He said that if you turned the Ten Commandments from negative to positive they went from ten to two. 1) Love the Lord thy God above all else. 2) Love your neighbor as yourself. So if we think about these when we think about social action, we have no choice but to do as God instructed us.

Hopefully, I will receive information from all our Churches, Missions and Study Groups, so that I will be able to report the conditions as they exist throughout our Fellowship. •

Should The Church Get Into Campaigns To Effect Legislation?



In the March 4, 1976, issue of the *California Southern Baptist*, Baptist leader, W. B. Timberlake, spells out the answer, as he sees it, to the question "Aren't churches liable to lose their tax exemption if they support campaigns to effect legislation?"

He says churches have supported campaigns for and against any number of social concerns from busing, to equal rights, environmentalism, freedom for political prisoners, drug and alcohol control, etc. But, he says, "as long as the church group does not officially and continuously support political campaigns, there is little likelihood that the tax exemption will be removed."

He lists four ways to make our Christian connections known on situations concerning bad or good laws: 1) as individual church members, 2) as a pastor of a church, 3) as a church, 4) as denominational boards and committees.

1. Church people are individual citizens and they can pass out petitions, bring them to church, propose and oppose laws, etc. The church is not responsible for the individual.

2. Pastors, as individuals can speak up on any subject. Pastors are regarded as opinion-makers by lawmakers and the media. If the pastor does not speak up or work on moral issues, the community has no real moral leadership.

3. Churches may lend their buildings for meetings regarding moral or social issues with no cause of fear. The occasional offering of support for a moral issue, an official resolution for or against some legislative issue of moral or social concern should not endanger tax-exempt status. If a small percentage of income is devoted to social and moral issues there will be no trouble, based on past experience.

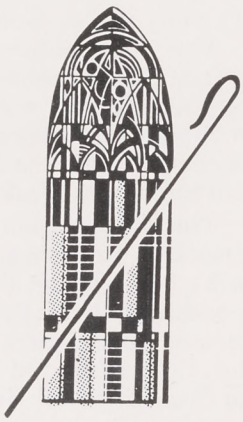
4. Many denominational groups have paid lobbyists in the capital: Roman Catholics, Adventists, Mormons, Nazarenes, The Council of Churches, Methodists, etc. Any denominational group may pass a resolution and inform legislators of their concern in moral issues. ●

INSIDE IN UNITY ===

Continued from page 3

"The Great Commission of Jesus Christ still girdles the globe with the reassurring message of Christ's death for sinners and ... new life by the Holy Spirit," Henry writes.

At the same time one fifth of human beings on this earth must live on an annual income of $50 or less, and



each year three and a half million of them don't make it — dying of starvation. 50% of the world's population in some way suffer the oppression of being "the other half" in male dominated societies. 10% of the world's population are in some way denied the full gospel of love and joy and peace with a lover of the same sex. "No century seems ever to have faced such multiplied human crises as ours... But the shedding of tears is not enough to fulfill the great commission...," Henry concludes.

Christians are called to do all they do in the name of Christ — to bring people to the salvation of Christ, liberation from sin — and death. That death can be the hell of separation from God, or death in the hells of oppression.

What is the great commission? What is an evangelical helping hand?

It seems to me, if MCC is an exodus church, it should be leading people forth from slavery into liberation. Christian Social Action is one way of marching toward the Kingdom. It means we must not be afraid of the journey.

Rev. Larry Bernier's cover design calls attention to some of the social concerns of our age. This month's IN UNITY takes a look at a crossection of the Christian Social Action involvements of MCC members. It gives us space for reflection on where we have been so that we can focus on where the trip is taking us and what we ought to be doing about it. We dare not be afraid of the journey. ●

"SEXISM is ALIVE and WELL in the UFMCC?"

A Report on the
Southwest District Conference
on Sexism

by Rev. Val Valrejean

THE GLEANERS (*Millet*)

Under the direction of Exhorter Brenda Hunt, a two-day district wide conference entitled, "Sexism is Alive and Well in the UFMCC" was held February 26 and 27 at MCC LA. The conference opened Friday evening with registration and an informal rap group discussion of the many instances of sexism throughout the Fellowship, centering on the issue of sexist language and liturgy.

A worship service, under the direction of the Los Angeles exhorters, followed. Rev. Valerie J. Valrejean (MCC LA) delivered the sermon entitled, "Jesus Christ, Superfeminist." She presented many scriptural illustrations of Jesus' revolutionary behavior toward women showing that He always treated women as equals and counted many women among his most devout followers and closest friends. She stated that, "Jesus' behavior toward women clearly revealed Him as a superfeminist in a patriarchal, sexist society, an aspect of his character virtually ignored by the traditional church and all too often forgotten when discussing sexism in MCC."

She concluded that sexism could only be eliminated from MCC through "the concious identification of each member and leader with the feminism of Jesus and the act of repentance of the sin of sexism by individuals and by the church as a whole. Then, having the proper spiritual attitude, we can construct programs that will make equality a reality." After the sermon, the conference was dismissed with prayer to reconvene Saturday morning.

Saturday was devoted to workshops, the first led by Exhorter Brenda Hunt, entitled "Subtle Sexism." The workshop opened with a spirited discussion of the definition of sexism and feminism and concluded with a study of sex role stereotyping subtly presented by the media. An exercise examining magazine ads brought this fact out.

The early afternoon workshop, "Sexism and the Scriptures," was led by Rev. Jeff Pulling and Rev. Valerie Valrejean. Rev. Pulling gave a moving testimony concerning his identification as a feminist, stating that "the entire success of the Gay Liberation Movement depends on the success of the Women's Liberation Movement" and that since "Christ was a feminist, the Christian message of liberation is essentially a feminist message also."

The misinterpretation of various New Testament statements about women written by St. Paul were discussed in light of new historical evidence, the cultural conditions of the time, and the personality of St. Paul. Rev. Pulling presented a study of the Old Testament prophets use of feminine imagery in describing God and showed that in the creation story, the first creation account makes no distinction between male and female as equally created in the image of God and given the divine blessing. And again it was stressed that parts of the Bible could only be understood by comparing them to the words and behavior of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

In the last workshop several goals and actions were agreed upon:

1) To submit to IN UNITY magazine materials about sexism.

2) To compile a glossary of non-sexist language to be distributed to all pastors and worship coordinators in the district.

3) To petition the board of home missions to question each applicant for ministerial license as to their understanding and support of the concept of non-sexist worship.

4) To organize a separate district workshop for all clergy and lay leaders.

Since the workshop, a district committee dealing with sexism in worship has been formed with the following people as members: Brenda Hunt, Chairperson; Lucia Chappelle, Julie Alexander, Jim Brennon, Rita Cisneros, Rev. Valerie Valrejean, Rev. David Farrell, Rev. Jeff Pulling, Michael Cole. ●

"JESUS THE LIBERATOR"

from a speech by
Dr. Robert McAfee Brown

(Excerpted from *The Witness*, Episcopal Publishing Company, Spring, 1976.)

From what does Jesus free us, and for what does He free us? . . .

Negatively, He frees us from the false securities by which we try to make our lives secure. He makes an uncomfortably exclusive claim upon us. We are to give primary allegiance to Him, and that means that we can only give secondary allegiance to anyone or anything else. Those other loyalties that have heretofore claimed us turn out to be inadequate and therefore false. They do not free. They destroy, particularly when we build them into the structures of our society.

Take the forms of oppression in our society: Racism, sexism, classism, imperialism. Those do not free. They enslave. They do no only enslave those on whom they are imposed. They enslave those who do the imposing . . .

Positively, He frees us for the possibility of seeing the world through eyes other than our own. I offer that phrase as a "non-theological" equivalent for the theological word "conversion." He leads us to a fundamental change of direction, so that the concern of the "other" can become our own concern.

In the midst of much that remains unclear to me, one thing at least becomes increasingly clear: There is a convergence today between the Biblical view of Jesus as Liberator, and the cry of oppressed peoples for liberation. For our own day, to "see the world through eyes other than our own" has simply got to mean seeing through the eyes of the poor and dispossessed. When the story of Jesus and the story of human oppression are put side by side, they fit. They are simply different versions of the same story. The cry of the hungry is overwhelming. The cry of the politically and economically exploited is overwhelming. The cry of those in prison and under torture is overwhelming. The cry of parents who know that their children are doomed to stunted and warped lives is overwhelming.

But it is not enough to "see" something: We must also act upon what we see. And so, that means a third thing: Jesus not only frees us from false allegiances, so that we can begin to see the world through eyes other than our own, He also frees us for struggle with and on behalf of those "others," who are the poor and dispossessed. . .

Part of the liberation they struggle to describe is the liberation that comes from being part of the supportive community that is the church, and the exhilerating discovery that we are not alone in such efforts. We must support and challenge and prod each other in our common allegiance to the smiting and healing Word of God, embodied in Jesus, who promises to free us not only from inner attitudes but from oppressive outer structures as well. ●

REV. CARTER HEYWARD SPEAKS AT NGTF QUARTERLY EVENT

Episcopal Priest — Rev. Carter Heyward

NGTF QUARTERLY EVENT
The Rev. Carter Heyward of the Episcopal Divinity School addressing the audience at the NGTF Quarterly Event, "Gays and the Religious Community: What's Ahead For Us," in New York on March 6. Other participants were Carl Bennett of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, the Rev. John McNeil of Woodstock College, Ms. Arlie Scott of the Unitarian Universalist Office of Gay Concerns, the Rev. Howard Wells of the Metropolitan Community Church, the Rev. Robert Herrick of NGTF, and Ken Briggs, Religion Editor of the *New York Times*. The event drew a crowd of over 300 persons. Photo by Ken Howard. ●

LUTHERANS STUDY SEXISM

The board for the Lutheran Church in America's Division for Mission in North America has ordered a study of the theological issues related to the role of women as equals in the church.

The board also asked the July LCA convention to propose that every LCA synod set up a task force on justice and equality for women and men, to include efforts to increase female synod leadership.

"Even a cursory glance at assumptions and traditions in the church," a committee on women reported, "reveals a strong masculine orientation in both concept and language, thus distorting and limiting the development of both men and women. This situation calls for a vigorous response from the church."

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES: DECLARATION ON RACISM; SEXISM

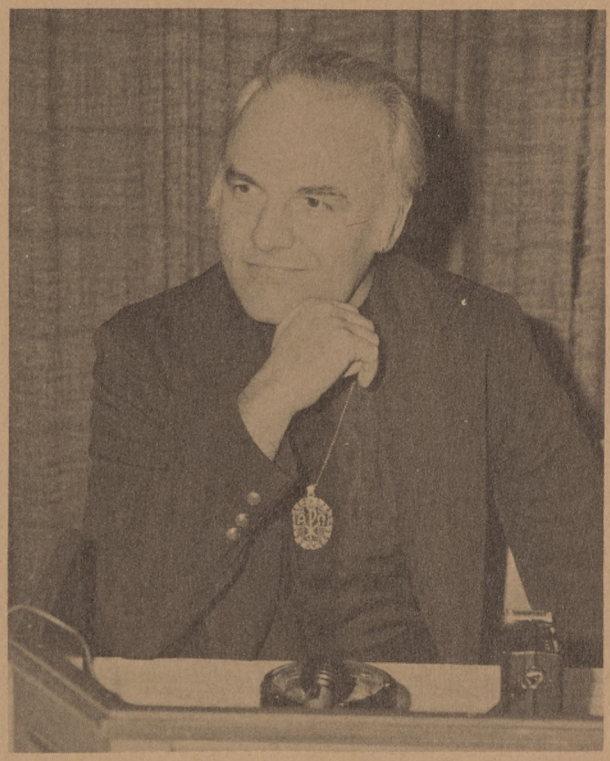
The Fifth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches offered the world some strong statements on racism and sexism.

The WCC has been criticized for the gap between its declarations about human rights and the full implementation of its declarations. The Program to Combat Racism recognized this and declared, "Because of the discrepancies between what we profess and what we practice, it is crucial for the churches to move from making their declarations about human rights to working for the full implementastion of human rights.

"Christ calls us to follow Him, committed to the cause of the oppressed . . . God's love is intended for all . . . It leads us into the struggle of the poor and the oppressed both within and outside the church as they seek to achieve their full human rights."

In its lengthy "Recomendations on Sexism," the Assembly asserted there is ample evidence that the expertise and gifts of women are not being fully used by the church. Member churches are urged:

1. To allocate funds for the theological education of women;
2. To insure full participation of women in all decision-making bodies;
3. To take action to admit women to all ordained ministries;
4. To offer (ordained) women the same opportunities and pay as men.



(In answer to many requests, this article is an edited version of a sermon delivered in March, 1976, at Los Angeles Metropolitan Community Church on the subject of women's liberation in the church.)

"All Are One In Christ Jesus"

by Reverend James E. Sandmire

In the recent history of our Fellowship the increasing numbers and importance of women in our congregations have led to broad concern and dialog on the place of the womens' liberation movement within the church. Difficult questions about sexism, hierarchical church organization, women in the ministry, de-gendering of hymns and scriptures have surfaced at General Conference, district conferences and congregational meetings.

Slowly and sometimes painfully, the official position of the Fellowship as articulated at General Conference has emerged as strongly supportive of women's rights and of the need for the church to change and respond to women's concerns. At the Fellowship level, commissions meet, reports are passed, two women are elected to the Board of Elders, increasing numbers of women enter the ministry and pastor churches. Despite this, on the local level there is great variation from congregation to congregation on this question. Even in the most open congregations tempers flare when favorite hymns or scriptures are de-gendered. Many men and a good many women appear increasingly resistant to the requests and sometimes the demands of more ardent sisters and brothers who see in the church's response to feminism a measure of the Fellowship's validity within the modern world. Increasing concern is expressed that this issue is endangering the unity of the Fellowship.

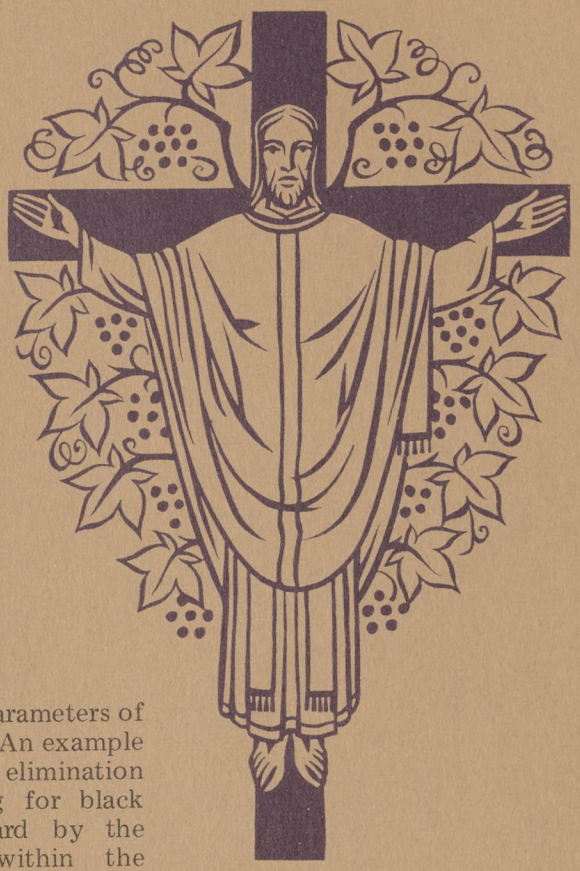
I don't believe we must inevitably head for disaster over this issue. There is too much rheteric on both sides and very little rational discussion or prayerful dialog. This sermon is an attempt to bring a few ideas forward which may inform us with fact and clarify the issues for further discussion.

I would begin by placing the concerns of women within the context of historical liberation movements in this country. The noble ideals of liberty and equality articulated by this nation's founders were limited at our country's inception to the white, male propertied citizens. The poor and landless, minorities, and women were all left out of the political process. The subsequent domestic history of the United States has often revolved around the efforts of these disenfranchised groups to secure the vote together with their full social and political rights. The Bill of Rights became a part of the Constitution, the vote was gradually extended to all white adult males, slaves were freed and at least technically the vote and political rights were extended to all citizens regardless of racial origin. Following the Civil War, many women and some men joined together to fight for extension of suffrage to all adults regardless of gender. The battle was long and hard fought. All of the energies of the organized women's movement were devoted to the battle. When the vote was guaranteed to women, their one issue movement collapsed.

In the last 35 years the poor, blacks, Spanish speaking, Indians and other ethnic minorities, and women began to see that the vote

was not the magic answer to the problem of economic oppression and social prejudice. The social and political institutions and the educational apparatus of the country were designed to prevent these excluded groups from achieving equal opportunity, personal dignity and full political and social rights. The upheavals of World War II, Korea and Vietnam; the overthrowing of white colonial empires by black and Third World peoples; economic uncertainty and the seeming inability of the political and economic institutions of Western nations to meet the growing social unrest all led to a decline in faith in our political process. Suddenly, to many, our society seemed oppressive, unresponsive, corrupt and vulnerable to attack. The increased group consciousness of those who felt left out of society coincided with the rise of charismatic leaders who could voice the anguish and anger of blacks, Latins, American Indians, women and now a new group — gay people. The 1960's became the time of Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Dennis Banks, Betty Fredan Gloria Steinem and Troy Perry. These leaders galvanized literally millions into nonviolent confrontation and into political and social action. They helped create a sense of group pride. The liberation movements were born. If we understand this admittedly simplistic social history to be reasonably correct, we can see why the women's movement surfaced at this time in its modern form. It is part of a broad battle for full rights as persons and citizens which has shaped our history since the beginning. It is neither new nor strange. The women's movement and their tactics are part of our heritage.

To understand further the development of the women's movement and to sort out what appears to be conflicting voices within it, we must briefly examine the sociology of modern liberation movements in this country. The black liberation movement developed a kind of internal dynamic that other liberation movements have generally followed. The first dawning of group consciousness was usually nurtured within the parameters of defined, limited goals. An example would be the fight for elimination of barriers to voting for black people carried forward by the NAACP. Working within the established system, the limited goals and vision of such organizations did not satisfy returning black veterans, young people and other more militant members of the community. When desegregation flamed into the news and charismatic leaders grew out of the community, the concept of group consciousness grew into a glorification of black heritage. Black pride was born. Still working within the system, the idea was to instill a sense of personal worth in black people. This pride would be a catalyst to unite black people in the fitht to break into the dominant system and share its benefits.



Gradually, some more militant members of the black community began to rethink their struggle. Out of black pride came a sense of identity that said to some that black people could be self sufficient and that they did not need the white system of social and political ideas. Indeed, white heritage could only corrupt black experience. To preserve black authenticity, the movement must build its own institutions and values. The difficult days of the flowering of black separatism began with these ideas. The stridency and militancy of black separatism often divided other blacks and bewildered white liberals. The question today is still open as to the extent to which black people wish to be a part of the dominant system around them. This dynamic of cooperation to struggle to pride to separatism and back to alert, independent struggle within the nation's political and social structure occurs within the American Indian, the Latin, the gay and the women's movement. Since individuals follow the same development, it follows that those within a liberation movement are at different stages in their own thought. The result is a confusing array of voices speaking for the liberation movement and often at odds with what appears to be the prevailing view of those within a given liberation movement at the time.

The women's movement is following the same development dynamic in my opinion. The women within it also speak with a

variety of voices reflecting their own perspective of their liberation. At least three major sectors of the women's movement may be detected. The first is characterized by such organizations as the National Organization of Women (NOW). This group generally accepts the dominant institutions of a male oriented society. Their struggle is to find full equality of treatment and opportunity within it. The second group rejects the present system as corrupting to women. The women in this group are primarily separatists who believe a radical overthrow of the present system is the only answer to their concern. The third group see men and women both rejecting the present social system and working together to build a system that reflects both female and male values. In the church we may recognize all these voices. If we place those voices within the analytical framework suggested here, we may all better understand the voices we hear in our midst. Understanding is the first step in solving the problems created by the struggle of many of our sisters.

The patriarchal Christian church has long been the principal moral base upon which a male dominated society in the Western world has rested. It has given the scriptural authority for the subjugation of women. It has "brainwashed" men and women for centuries in the lessons that women are placed on earth to bare children and to be subject to a husband. Every aspect of the church from its organization around a male dominated ministry — to its doctrine of home and family — to its evoking of the image of a Father-God reduces women physically and psychologically to subservient status. No wonder many women feel no possible benefit to women can come from the Christian church. It is against this background the women's liberation movement encountered Metropolitan Community Churches — a church begun by gay males and largely attended by gay males for the first year or two of its existence.

Given the nature of the Christian church and the peculiarities of MCC, and given the realities of the women's liberation movement in all its voices among our women members, is there anything MCC can really offer women? If so, what should be our responses to expressed women's concerns? What are the chances of succeeding in addressing women's concerns within the structure of the church? I can not treat the subject exhaustively here. Indeed, my thoughts are still developing. However, my first responses would revolve around the following ideas.

1) The nature of the Christian church historically, the structure of its organization and its teaching about a Father-God have little or nothing to do with the center of our faith — Jesus the Christ — and his message of faith. To the degree we have allowed the Fellowship to simply copy the organizational and doctrinal models of churches from which we came, there is little we can offer in the way of hope to women, or to blacks, or to Latins, or to American Indians, or to gay people, or to any oppressed person. To offer a slightly laundered copy of a demonstratively oppressive institution as a vehicle for personal or group liberation is ludicrous.

2) The center of our faith is Jesus Christ in whom there is no Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female. It is in bypassing the Christian church organization and grasping directly the liberating message of Jesus Christ that we encounter God in the world. Such a God could strike through history, prejudice and institutions to the human heart. Only when we can do that, and preach that and live that will we be sensitized to the anger and hurt of the oppressed that disrupts our comfort and complacency.

3) We need desparately to read the Scriptures in the light of Jesus Christ and the unfolding of God's love for all. Only then can we get away from Father-God concept and see the Scriptures as increasingly revealing a God who is both male and female, yet transcends both. Only then will we be able to find the words to describe the true God. For to describe God only as a male Father image is to describe a false God and to break the First Commandment! True, new words for God may be uncomfortable because they are strange to us. But they may also open a whole new understanding of the true God. To come closer to the truth has got to be

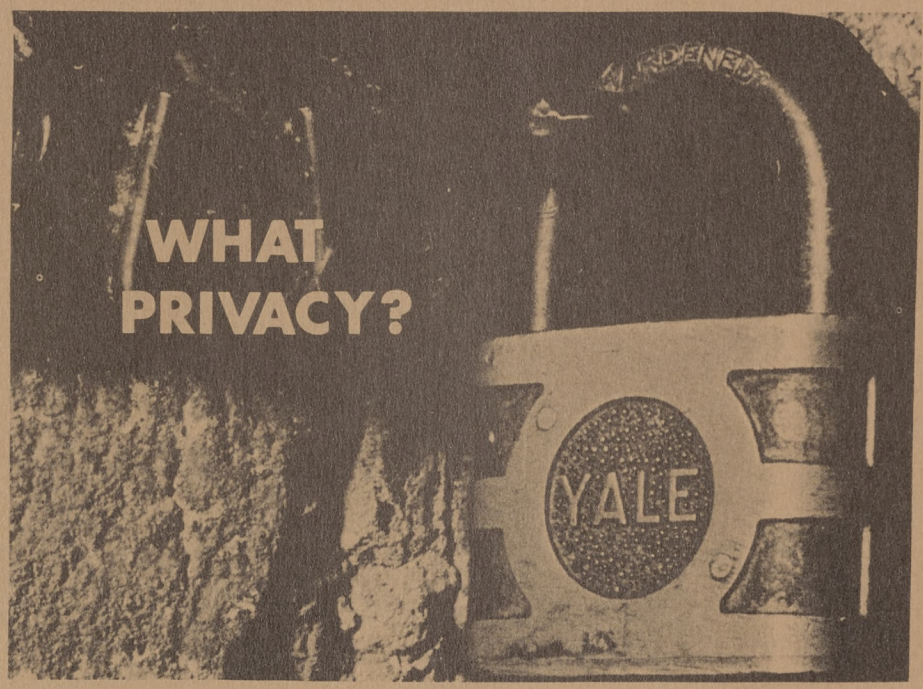
liberating, if difficult.

4) We need ministers willing to create a climate of concern, cooperation and compassion among and between men and women on the issue of women's concerns. Such ministers will use their teaching office to puncture myths and attack prejudice. Such ministers will lead their flocks and not respond to every shift in majority opinion. At the same time such ministers will realize they must pastor to all. They must counsel moderation. They must develop a program of education that gradually allows the congregation to come to a unity of mind. Obviously, such a job requires a ministry of men and women who have faced their own prejudices, who do not panic in the face of threat or discord, who set a personal example that provides a base of morality, spirituality and rationality for everyone. I appeal to our ministers to study and pray fervently over the concerns of women and men in their congregation.

5) We need congregations and Boards of Directors who understand we are an authentic new revelation. As such, they must be willing to view the Gospel through fresh eyes — not afraid to stretch mentally and spiritually to grasp new ideas. We need men who understand that women's liberation is really human liberation. Women's liberation frees men from roles, from stereotyping, from concentration on sexual prowess as a measure of being a man. When women are truly free (and only women can tell us when that is so) then men are truly free. When the church responds fully to women's concerns (and only women can tell us when that happens) then the church can be fully responsive to men also by freeing us from having to be dominant in the House of God to being whatever the Holy Spirit would have us be.

6) We need sisters who are willing to talk with one another and settle their own differences with understanding. We need sisters willing to continue their patience and their understanding while we all learn about their concerns. We need sisters who won't let us stop our efforts to meet their concerns, but who know this struggle will be won gradually over a period of time and not by force in one spectacular struggle. We need creative sisters who can help ministers and Boards address women's concerns in a way that clearly benefits all.

In future articles, I hope to describe in specific detail a program for dealing adequately and responsively with the women's movement within the Fellowship. I am convinced that the liberating promise of this new revelation of Jesus Christ we call the Universal Fellowship has within it the resources to free us all and to direct us all toward the One who saves us all — even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. •



The U.S. Supreme Court's summary ruling that states have the authority to punish private homosexual acts between consenting adults is a disappointing departure from the recent trend to expand the constitutional right to privacy.

Homosexual behavior, considered aberrant and undesirable by most persons, is inevitably a subject of profound social controversy, and the reluctance of the justices to involve themselves in that controversy is perhaps understandable. But in many states private homosexual behavior is also a matter of restrictive law, and the specific question before the court was whether such laws violate individual constitutional rights.

The court, in effect, chose to evade dealing with that question, and we think it was wrong in doing so. It was wrong in refusing even to hear oral arguments that would have fully explored the issues in the case. It was wrong in failing to hand down a written decision to explain its reasoning. And it was most wrong in affirming the lower-court decision upholding state prohibitions on private and consensual adult homosexual behavior.

In a series of recent decisions, most notably on constitutionality of state abortion bans, the court said there is a broad constitutional right to privacy protecting individual freedom of choice. The challenge to the Virginia law that prohibits willing adult homosexual activity in private went directly to the substance and applicability of that right.

It seems clear to us, as it seemed clear to the court in earlier rulings, that the state should not have the power to interfere in voluntary, private acts of individuals where no harm to others occurs. The application of that principle cannot be selective.

Legislative action is the preferable remedy for laws that restrict an individual's constitutional right to privacy. But where states refuse to act on such constitutional questions, the Supreme Court should, so that a uniform standard of law will exist. Such a standard does not now exist, and because of that many individuals are being denied their rights.

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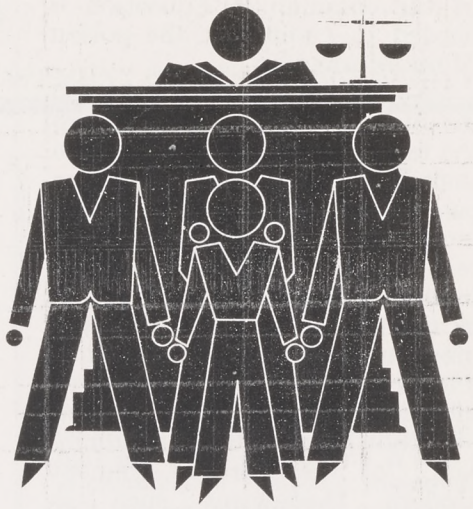
Supreme Court Preserves Status-quo



The decision of the United States Supreme Court, March 30, 1976, in effect allowing states to have discriminatory "sodomy" laws, immediately caused a stir throughout the gay communities of the United States.

Phone calls from the media, phone calls from the parents of gays, phone calls from concerned gay people caused Rev. Troy Perry, Rev. James Sandmire, Morris Kight, Al Gordon, Susan Phelan and other gay leaders in Los Angeles to go before the press March 31 to answer questions on this surprising and, in the words of Mr. Kight , "incredible" decision.

On a 6-3 vote, the high court affirmed the decision of a three-judge U.S. District Court in Virginia that the right to privacy does not extend to homosexual relationships. Previous recent Supreme Court rulings had "legalized" abortion and contraceptives on the basis of the right to privacy. In this ruling, the Supreme Court pointed out that the right to privacy was for the protection of home, marriage, and family life but does not apply to homosexual conduct forbidden in the Bible.

The ruling does not affect the consenting adults law in California and 13 other states. But it does give states the legal basis for having laws that would allow invasion of the privacy of the homes of consenting homosexual adults.

Kight opened the 9:00 a.m. press conference saying that the two people convicted in the Virginia case now have to go back to the court that convicted them and face humiliation. He likened it to the Dred Scott Decision in its slave-making implications. "But I do not share in the opinion," he declared, "that the sky is falling. Gay people have suffered for 3000 years in the Judaeo-Christian culture. Changes are taking place. Changes will continue and we will continue to press for changes. The Supreme Court chose not to be the avenue of social change."

Rev. James Sandmire said, "gay people in their struggle for justice have lost a significant battle, but not the war. I hope it impresses on people interested in justice for gay people, but who have been passive, that they can't wait for the courts. The emphasis shifts back to the legislative process. I call now on gay brothers and sisters everywhere to join us now to make sure the laws are changed in all the states. Gay people will liberate themselves. It is clear straight people won't do it."

Susan Phelan, a lesbian activists and Program Director of the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center, Prison Probation and Parole Program, issued this statement:

"My initial reaction was outrage. I feel that the Supreme Court decsision represents a Dark Ages mentality and a homophobic pathology, a reflection of their ignorance on the subject of homosexuality.

"The Second reaction was fear for the rights of all citizens. If the right to privacy is removed for one segment of the population, it can be removed for all.

"Finally, the Supreme Court decision presented me with a challenge that will not go unmet. We have fought long and hard to achieve the rights due to us as citizens and we will not give up now. This is a regrettable setback for the Gay Rights movement but it does not bring defeat, rather it brings the added incentive to fight and to see this decision rescinded."

Attorney Al Gordon said, "The Supreme Court has been wrong before. The Supreme Court upheld the denial of freedom to 70,000 American citizens in World War II because they happened to be of Japanese decent. I speak as a heterosexual gay liberationist activists, and as the parent of a gay person. This is an attack on all people. It allows the government, in violation of the Constitution, to invade the privacy of a person's home. This must be appealed to a higher court, the court of public opinion." He went on to express the opinion that the judges were motivated in the opinion by a fear "of opening the floodgates of gay rights." In answer to a reporter's question, Gordon said the decision would probably accelerate or at least help the initiative drive by the "Family Lobby," an organization of "concerned Christians" which is working to get California's recently enacted consenting adult laws repealed.

Charlotte Spitzer, a heterosexual woman representing Parents of Gays, said, "My children are not criminals. They deserve full rights. The Supreme Court made a tremendous mistake. We love our children and we're going to fight for them, as human beings, as tax payers, as members

of the community. Education is needed to counteract the poison of misinformation."

A reporter called attention to the Supreme Court's reference to the famous Leviticus verse, "Thou shalt not lie with man . . ." The panel seemed agreed that it was incredible enough that the Supreme Court Judges would use this biblical statement as an argument in making the decision, but even more incredible was their lack of knowledge of the trends of modern theology. "They showed no knowledge," Rev. Sandmire said, "of the work of eminent modern theologians such as Norma Pittinger to offer reinterpretation of the 4 or 5 passages of Scripture which appear to attack homosexuality."

Kight, Perry, and Sandmire appeared to agree that a major task ahead of the gay community is to raise the consciousness level of the delegates and alternates to the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. •

SUPREME COURT DECISION: MORTY MANFORD'S STATEMENT

Morty Manford, President of the National Coalition of Gay Activists issued this statement in reaction to the Supreme Court "Invasion of Privacy" decision.

"The Supreme Court has turned its back on us in our fight to assure the most basic of rights to privacy – the right to have consensual sex with a person of one's choice, free from fear of government reprisals. The Court's action underscores the importance of our demonstrations against the Democratic and Republican National Conventions this summer. Both the Republicans and Democrats want public support in placing their candidate in the White House. Yet both political parties have been unresponsive and insensitive to the plight of gay people. We will demonstrate this summer to show that more and more of America's 20 million lesbians and gay men are emerging from personal, social and political obscurity to demand our constitutional rights."

SUPREME COURT DECISION: DIGNITY'S STATEMENT

Dignity, a national organization of gay and concerned Catholics, expresses its disappointment with the recent Supreme Court decision upholding legislation against homosexual acts.

We feel that the Supreme Court, in supporting a state's right to regulate sexual acts between consenting adults, as failed to recognize the serious inconsistencies and injustices in most of those regulatory laws. By its own admission, the Court "made no judgement on the wisdom or policy of the statutes." and we see that as its basic failure in responsibility.

As a religious organization we recognize that most of those state statutes are the product of ancient religious influences and attempts to legislate morality. As such, they represent theological and scriptural interpretation now seen by many religious leaders as inaccurate and inadequate.

The laws are often applied arbitrarily to actions between both homosexual and heterosexual consenting adults, insofar as those actions do not conform to the traditional pattern for sexual expression. (Attributing sodomy and oral sex solely to homosexuals is inaccurate; such expressions are widely practiced in the heterosexual community, despite their proscription by the same laws.)

Numerous legislators are calling for a total overhaul of these inadequate and destructive laws, on both the state and national levels.

Dignity will continue to support such efforts at legislative change so that responsible love and sexual expression in private between consenting adults will no longer be proscribed by unjust, inadequate legislation.

† The National Office of Dignity

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

New Senate Bill

There has been a proposed bill for gay rights in the U.S. House of Representatives since New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug introduced it in May 1974.

Now Senator Alan Cranston of California has authorized his staff to develop a gay civil rights bill that will be able to receive broad bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate.

Strategists feel that initially a bill which focuses on a priority area such as employment discrimination would be the first step in getting the whole package, as represented in the Abzug Bill in the House.

A lengthy story in the March *Gays on the Hill* goes into some interesting detail about the factors involved in coming up with such a bill. For instance, how do you deal with job discrimination without forcing people to come out in order to keep their jobs under a "gay quota system?" How do you protect people who want to come out from being fired, and people who are out from being denied jobs?

A number of Senators have made statements on gay civil rights. Senator Hubert Humphrey's statement is typical. "I see no reason why homosexual Americans should be excluded from equal protection under the law. I oppose arbitrary discrimination against homosexuals as it pertains to unfair occupational hiring practices."

Kameny on the Law

In a letter to the MCC Washington, DC, Newsletter, *Sharing*, Franklin Kameny, Commissioner on the District of Columbia Commission on Human Rights, well known gay activist, explains that a law is only good if it is used.

"We have a strongly phrased, strongly administered Human Rights Law in Washington, DC, which prohibits *ANY* discrimination, against *any* one, in *any* place of public accommodation. We have the law. All it requires is that people invoke it. The law can be invoked by persons merely witnessing the discrimination...

"We worked hard to get the law written as it is, and we worked hard to get it passed by the City Council, and we worked hard to get an open gay onto the Human Rights Commission which helps enforce it. But a good protective law unused is no better than no law at all."

"Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics"

The Vatican "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics" has received wide coverage, of course, in the press around the world. It has stirred a lot of responses from various quarters, in both the religious and secular press. The responses have been most thought-provoking. Brian McNaught's scorching article in the Advocate, *Daniel Maquire's piece in* Commonweal *and Bishop Mugavero's Pastoral letter cover many aspects of the questions caused by the Delcaration. Father Larry Tozzer, OFM, Chaplain of Dignity Sacramento has published a sensitive and balanced response in the April newsletter of that group. It is available from P.O. Box 9643, Sacramento, CA 95823.*

The following are a few selected responses generated by the declaration:

The March national newsletter of Dignity carries an article headlined "Bishop Backs Gay Rights."

It refers to a pastoral letter of Bishop Francis Mugavero, leader of one and a half million Catholics in the Brooklyn Diocese.

"It is believed to be one of the first official responses from an American bishop to the Vatican's recent declaration on sexual ethics."

It calls for the implementation of the legitimate rights of all people, including homosexuals.

Copies of the letter are available from The Chancery, Diocese of Brooklyn, 75 Green Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11238.

In another statement, Bishop Mugavero stated that homosexuals have a right to be priests and teachers, but that they should remain closeted.

Meanwhile in Boston, Rev. A. L. Kershaw, pastor of Boston's episcopal Emmanuel Church delivered a sermon in which he declared that the Vatican view "is not the Christian view. It is not my view . . . We are in mid-revolution. The old rules and mores are gone. The patterns of the future have not jelled.

"Homosexuality is the sexuality of millions of people. This is their mode of expressing their relationship to God and to neighbor.

"Sex takes on a new meaning (in today's world) . . . accepting our own sexuality as good, entrusting our sexuality to another, receiving the sexuality of another . . . There is an entirely new basis for evaluating the meaning of masturbation, homosexuality, and premarital sex. In fact, they no longer make sense as moral categories.

"The moral issue becomes; what is the meaning of sex as it relates to personhood: Self, self meeting another person, in all my relationships." •

Take it from me, Governor, now that you've settled it— that's the last you'll ever hear of the matter.

A CATHOLIC BISHOP

"The Tablet, weekly paper of the Brooklyn Roman Catholic diocese, added its voice to the growing criticism of the Vatican's latest pronouncement on sex. While the new statement carefully notes that gay sex isn't as serious as masturbation, *The Tablet* complained that to ask pastors 'to recommend overcoming the incurable is to counsel the impossible and it is precisely because of the frustration of such a situation that moral theologians are exploring other pastoral solutions.' In London, the Archbishop of Canterbury said the new statement lacks loving understanding. In New York, Editor John Deedy of *Commonweal*, called it 'the psychosexual equivalent of declaring the earth flat. Catholics won't take it seriously.' On Feb. 21, Bishop Francis Mugavero issued a pastoral letter firmly supporting gays civil rights — which Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York has strenuously opposed." •

† *from Lutherans Concerned, April 1976*

PASTOR DON BORBE

In a lengthy pastoral letter in the Philadelphia MCC *Bell Ringer*, Pastor Don Borbe responded to the Vatican document on sexuality, which said that homosexuals are to be treated with compassion, cured if possible, but that masturbation and homosexual expression is sinful, and that sex, at all, is only permissable within a heterosexual marriage.

"The Church," he writes, "by limiting sexual expression through guilt is contributing to those failures which often lead to suicide, drug addiction, or relationship breakdowns.

"The Church, as commissioned by Jesus Christ, is to lift the burdens of the heavy laden, and to replace those burdens with a 'yoke' that is easy and a 'burden' that is light.

"I can no longer be tolerant of a gospel that declares people 'incurably' unacceptable. Pastoral compassion, betrayed by underlying unacceptability, is a hypocritical gloss." •

LeBlanc supporters demonstrate at Terminal Island Marine Base —Pat Rocco photo

PASTOR PAUL PEACHY LEADS PRAY-IN

The Rev. Paul Peachey, Pastor of MCC Honolulu, led a "pray-in" at the State Capital of the State of Hawaii in April. For five days, April 5-9 from 7:30 until 5:30 p.m., it was just silent prayer, no signs, no banners, no chants.

The prayer vigil was on behalf of House Bill 500 which would make it illegal to discriminate against gays in employment and housing. The bill is bottled up in committee. Although most members of the committee approve the bill, the chairman won't bring it to a hearing. ●

Sergeant LeBlanc Maintains Right to Privacy

Staff Sergeant Robert L. LeBlanc is still fighting discharge by the Marine Corps. They claim he has homosexual tendencies. He insists his sexuality is his business, not that of the Marine Corps.

Of all the highly publicized military personnel fighting discharge on "homosexual charges," Sgt. LeBlanc is the only one still on active duty. All the others (Matlovich, Berg, et al.) have been discharged.

LeBlanc has been in the Marines for 13 years, is 30 and stationed at Terminal Island at Long Beach, CA. He is a graduate of the Los Angeles reserve police academy, has served as chief of military police in Los Angeles County.

He is fighting to prevent his discharge for "homosexual tendencies." LeBlanc's commanding officer has repeatedly asked him to declare his sexual preferences and LeBlanc has repeatedly refused. He has been cleared in two previous military trials.

LeBlanc has hired Los Angeles attorney Scott Pepper and filed a suit to prevent the military from discharging him and inquiring into his sexual preferences.

According to LeBlanc, he was followed by a plainclothes Naval Investigational Service agent to the Los Angeles Metropolitan Community Church. Sgt. LeBlanc told IN UNITY he has a right to attend MCC or any church of his choice. He feels the Marine Corps has no right to deduce from his attendance that he is gay, or to abridge his right to worship at any MCC church.

He insists he will fight the case all the way to the Supreme Court.

There has been considerable local publicity. Local television and radio stations have covered both the case and the demonstrations. Rev. Perry appeared with Sgt. LeBlanc in a special radio news documentary on March 12.

Friends and sympathizers staged an impromptu demonstration in front of gate one of the Terminal Island Marine Base on March 13. "Those one hundred people from all over southern California," said Data Boy Columnist, Basilio, a chief organizer, "were enough to let the Marine Corps know there is a wide base of support for Sgt. LeBlanc."

The two-hour peaceful march in front of the gate did indeed let Marine Corps authorities know that Sgt. LeBlanc was not alone in championing the cause of justice.

Two days later a federal court in Los Angeles gave LeBlanc the right to sue the federal government. "He estimates it will cost up to $10,000 to take his case all the way to the Supreme

Court," Basilio told IN UNITY, "but he's determined to take it as far as necessary."

Petitions are being circulated in behalf of Sgt. LeBlanc and are to be presented to Senator Alan Cranston at a demonstration in front of his Los Angeles office on April 16. The Senator has indicated in advance his interest in the case and his willingness to see justice done in the case. ●

Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda —Pat Rocco photo

TOM HAYDEN and JANE FONDA ATTEND MCCLA

U.S. Senate candidate Tom Hayden and his wife, movie actress Jane Fonda, attended MCC Los Angeles in March. They were introduced, as is the custom with any visitors, at the beginning of the service. Unlike most political visitors, the Haydens stayed for the entire service.

MCC member and Fellowship secretary, Frank Zerilli, one of the Hayden campaign coordinators, was host for the Haydens. "Jane was deeply moved and cried during the service," he said. "She was very impressed by the worship of MCC LA."

After the service, Zerilli arranged for Mr. Hayden to speak to a crowd in the Los Angeles Church social hall.

Hayden's campaign statement on gay rights calls for passage of the Abzug Amendment to the Civil Rights Act, which would prohibit discrimination in housing, hiring, public accommodations, and public services on the basis of sexual orientation.

In addition, Hayden calls for elimination of discrimination against gays in the federal penal system and in the armed services, including provisions for honorable discharges for those previously discharged for reasons of homosexuality, with retroactive benefits. He calls for the elimination of discriminatory practices in security matters, tax burdens, and dissemination of information by law enforcement agencies.

Hayden calls for gay people on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the establishment of a Gay Awareness Office in the federal government in order to oversee the elimination of discrimination against gays in the federal government. ●

Terry "Spider" Luton participates in a protest demonstration for individuals arrested in a LAPD raid on a gay community fund-raising event. —Pat Rocco photo

MAYOR COMMENDS GAY ORGANIZATION

For the first time in history the Mayor of Los Angeles has issued a "Commendation" to a gay organization. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley sent his top aid, deputy mayor Grace Davis, to present the official document at an awards banquet at Studio One, a large gay discotheque in West Hollywood.

The Society of Pat Rocco Enlightened Enthusiasts (SPREE) was the gay organization commended for seven years of service to the Los Angeles gay community. SPREE sprang up in 1969 as a "fan club" for popular gay film maker Pat Rocco, and hundreds of people have gathered monthly to view his films, as well as to see a full-scale live production put on by the members themselves.

SPREE whose regular membership numbers more than five hundred, has entertained thousands of people in its seven years of existence, and, through the encouragement of its "namesake" Pat Rocco, has formed within its membership the SPREE Drama Workshop, the SPREE Film Workshop, and monthly outings for members that range from theatre parties to weekend trips to the deserts and mountains of Southern California. It has also joined in with other gay organizations and causes doing benefits, donating money from its treasury, and giving much volunteer time and energy. ●

Pat Rocco and Mayor Bradley

●●●●●●●●●●●

Philadelphia MCC: A Political Church?

Recently Rev. Don Borbe, Pastor of MCC Philadelphia accepted the invitation of Mark Segal, organizer of the famed Gay Raiders (who first came into the national limelight by a zap of Walter Cronkite's newscast), to join him in a "fast in" demonstration at the Philadelphia City Hall to protest city council's refusal to vote on a piece of legislation designed to halt discrimination against homosexuals in that city.

Since then, according to the Bell Ringer, the monthly publication of MCC Philadelphia, the following events have accented the "political" life of MCC.

Rev. Borbe has regularly attended the meetings of the Center City Clergy Association.

Five church members carrying the MCC banner joined some 300 other marchers for a rally and prayer vigil at the Federal Building to protest what many black leaders have called an "FBI cover-up" in the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Led by Nick Cupo, MCC has been working with the Volunteers in Prison (VIP) program.

MCC members participated in a demonstration in front of the Keystone Insurance Building with the Disabled in Action (DIA) organization in behalf of a non-gay male who has refused auto insurance because of his disability, although statistics prove that the disabled have better driving records.

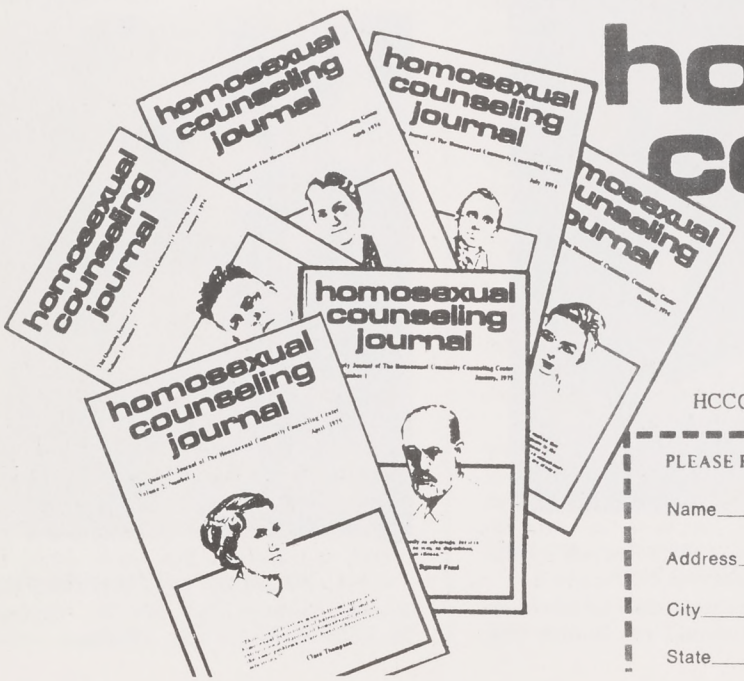
Rev. Borbe and MCC members joined the picketing of the movie, Snuff, a film that depicts the murder and dismembering of a woman so realistically that some people have conjectured that it was a filming of an actual murder and dismembering.

MCC supported a massive letter "mail in" for the Gay Media Project in approval of its new gay awareness television program, "Out Front."

Dave Powell writes in a Bell Ringer editorial, "These are highlights of MCC's efforts to join in the consciousness-raising of gays to all the oppression that surrounds our daily lives. MCC Philadelphia has crossed a 'political' threshold. We have come out of our clerical closets. We have announced to Philadelphia that this church supports any legislation that increases the dignity and self-respect of all people and we will demonstrate for the freedoms of all people."

The editorial, headlined "A Political Church?", goes on to explain, in Powell's opinion, what is "political" and what is "Christian." "When a church is quitely against a people, THAT'S POLITICAL. When the church supports human equality, THAT'S CHRISTIAN."

He cites the silence of the churches in Hitler's Germany as six million Jews were gassed to death; the "white" churches of the south and their attitude twoard black people; and the church which has for 2000 years watched as women remained second class citizens (and second class church "men.") •



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"Homosexuality and Ordination"

The Methodist, United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ magazine, Engage/Social Action, published a six-page article in its Feb-Mar 1976 issue entitle "Homosexuality and Ordination."

Written by two UCC ministers, Kenneth Bieber and Dale Bond, the article ventures the opinion that "the church can no longer close its eyes to the concerns inherent in this question."

Admitting there are no easy answers (where dealing with people who find it difficult to cope with "one more disruption in what has been a fairly standard, conventional way of life"), the authors state that "Christian responsibility requres the church to seek enlightenment on matters of sexuality, rather than hiding behind the shadows of misunderstanding and myth."

"In addition, the church will need to evaluate its understanding of the theology of ordination and professional requirements for the ministry. It must determine if what is implied in ordination for straight people, is different from what is implied for gay people. Associations will need to consider their criteria and expectations for those who seek this status. If the credentials generally require competence in the traditional function of ministry-preaching, the sacraments, teaching, counseling, etc. - - associations will need to decide if the fact of being gay impedes an otherwise viable, competent ministry.

"Finally, the church will have to deal with its own inconsistency when advocating civil rights for gay persons in the areas of housing and employment. And it will need to confront its own hypocrisy when it sometimes knowingly allows for the ordination or employment of 'closeted' homosexual ministers, while denying those same privileges to those who seek to preserve their personal integrity by 'coming out'." ●

Briefs

STEVENSON AIDE. . .

Los Angeles Councilwoman Peggy Stevenson has announced that openly gay aide Larry Reh, who has been on special assignment as liaison to the Hollywood gay community, has been assigned new responsibiilities within her legislative office.

She said Reh will be placed on the regular council staff and will continue in his liaison capacity. She said problems of gays would be more evenly distributed among staff members through the new arrangment.

"We have all learned new insights and sensitivities from the work that Larry has done," she said. "I think it is important in the overall picture that we all take the opportunity to exercise our concern and understanding."

NO BUSINESS IN BEDROOM

"Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that States may prosecute and imprison consenting adults for participating in homosexual acts."

It was Congressman Edward I. Koch from New York speaking to the House of Representatives of the United States: "Every person without regard to his or her sexuality should be outraged by this decision . . . The state has no business in the bedrooms of the Nation."

The full text of the lengthy statement is recorded in the Congressional Record, March 30, 1976, Vol 122, No. 46.

GREG CARMACK AT ASU. . .

Greg Carmack, who has attended MCC-LA and MCC Pheonix, recently began an organization at the Arizona State University at Tempe, Az., which he said would draw its membership from the estimated 3,300 gay people on campus.

Carmack, a pre-law student, said a gay organization is needed because none of the present 300 campus groups serve the specific interests of gays. He said the administration was initially favorable because "We're talking non-neurotic ways of doing things."

Dr. Blair Organizes Evangelicals Concerned

Evangelicals Concerned, an educational task force for ministry with homosexuals and their families and churches, was launched at a seminar held at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., February 22 and 23, 1976.

The meeting was scheduled simultaneously, though not officially connected with the 34th Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals and was called by Dr. Ralph Blair, Director of the Homosexual Community Counseling Center in New York City and a member of the NAE.

Blair said that with the 10 million people of NAE's service constituency, it was high time to address realistically the concerns of the homosexuals within the NAE instead of making condemnatory statements as though these spoke for all NAE members.

Those who attended the Washington seminar were members of the NAE and various evangelical churches. Participants shared their personal experiences of integrating their Christian faith and homosexuality.

According to Blair "I feel the conference in Washington marks the opening of a new era in the life of the evangelical church. Through Evangelicals Concerned we shall seek dialogue between the thousands of gay believers and the historic church. We stress our commitment to remain in the local bodies of believers and in Christian love confront the Church with our right to be."

The statement of faith of the new organization is the same as that of the NAE.

Dr. Blair's address is: 30 E. 30th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

Dr. Blair is also editor of the Homosexual Counseling Journal. Rev. Troy Perry is a member of the Advisory Board of the Homosexual Community Counseling Center. ●

Norman Pittenger Preaches at MCCLA

The Rev. Dr. Norman Pittenger, one of the foremost theologians in the world, preached the sermon for the evening service at MCC Los Angeles on March 21, 1976.

The internationally known author was featured speaker at the 1975 MCC General Conference in Dallas. The longtime professor at eminent theological schools in the United States and England visited the Los Angeles church while on one of his annual speaking tours in the United States.

Before preaching in MCC-LA, the Anglican priest and seminary professor had appeared at 12 major universities lecturing on process theology. At every one of them he was questioned about homosexuality, a subject on which he has been more than forthright in some of his more than 60 published books.

Nor did Father Pittenger leave his empathy for gay people to the printed page. His several deliberate statements in the first person left no doubt in the minds of the Christian Community of MCC Los Angeles that this venerable man's understanding of the subject was not merely theological and academic.

In his impeccable style and beautifully accented delivery, the preacher painted a word picture of God, pure unbounded love, creating, and then giving the Son to die that we might live. "How can we come to believe God is pure unbounded love? The way is by knowing and experiencing love at the human level. Here the gay world has something to say. In spite of our rejection as sick, crazy, some have managed to love. The love we have known, humanly experienced, is so wonderfully real that no human existence could contain it all. It must come from somewhere...The love with which God loved us is the love that moves the sun and stars and can move us...Therefore 1)we know now that we need never be afraid to love. The grain of the universe runs with our loving. 2) We need never be afraid to accept love, because the love that is in and behind everything accepts us, even you and me. 3) We can try to make all our contacts, brief and occasional or long and enduring, the kind in which love begins and may grow."

It seemed the applause would never end. Few passed up the opportunity in the receiving line to embrace and greet with a kiss this loveable friend of the gay community who had spoken so well of the love that comes from God - surely a love many felt for him. ●

Rev. Dr. Norman Pittenger
—Pat Rocco photo

Why are Fire Trucks Red?

Do you know why fire trucks are red?

Well, fire trucks have four wheels and eight men. Four plus 8 equals 12. There are 12 inches in a ruler. Queen Elizabeth is a ruler. And, the Queen Elizabeth is the largest ship in the seven seas. Seas have fish and fish have fins. The Finns fought the Russians, and the Russians are "red." Fire trucks are always "rushing." Therefore, fire trucks are always red!

If you think this is poor reasoning, just listen to some of our members explain why they don't attend the worship services.—Bulletin, Austin Avenue Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas.

New Editor at NEWSWEST

Issue No. 15, April 29, 1976, of *Newswest*, a biweekly newspaper pub-lished in Los Angeles, captures some of the activity and drama which makes this a very exciting period for the gay scene in America.

It's all summed up in four glaring headlines:

1) Ed Davis frees the slaves: BIGGEST, SILLIEST, COSTLIEST LAPD ANTI-GAY RAID IN HISTORY

2) The Chicago Conference

3) NIXON COURT: Back's Virginia's Between the Sheets Intrusion

4) Mayor Appoints Liaison To Gays: Bradley Inaugurates a Los Angeles First

The newspaper, which originated as an alternative when the nation's largest Gay newspaper, *The Advocate*, moved to the San Francisco area, carried in depth stories on all four of the headline articles.

Jeannie Barney, popular syndicated columnist ("Smoke from Jeannie's Lamp," "Prison Rap") and editor of *Drummer*, the publication for the leather fraternity, has recently been named Editor of *Newswest*.

Jeannie, who has been "Calendar" editor of *Newswest*, is a "long-time heterosexual gay activist." She is the first woman president of H.E.L.P., an organization which helps people in connection with arrests and jailing. Jeannie was the first person arrested and jailed in the recent police raid of a Los Angeles fund raising "slave auction."

Christian Social Action at MCC Providence, R.I.

Recently members of Metropolitan Community Church of Greater Providence who are involved in the Campus Ministry of Rhode Island College had the opportunity to assist in developing a Symposium on Homosexuality at the campus. Funds, amounting to almost $2000 were allocated to the College Gay Alliance. (MCC Campus Ministry was deemed ineligible because of the religious nature of the group.)

The Gay Alliance in cooperation with MCC Campus Ministry then organized the event which included appearances by Rev. Troy D. Perry, Ms. Elaine Noble and ex-Sgt. Leonard Matlovich.

Members of MCC Providence have organized a "Toward a Gayer Bicentennial Committee." They have asked the state Bicentennial Commission to recognize Gay Pride Day as an event of the Bicentennial. Told that that was impossible the committee has turned to the courts for help.

The case is to be heard Monday, April 26th. A press conference, attended by Committee members who are also involved in MCC, was very successful in alerting the larger community to the issues at stake.

Rev. Joseph Gilbert, Pastor of MCC Providence, appeared recently before the Northeastern Regional Platform Committee Hearings of the Democratic Party on behalf of New England Gays and the congregations of the Northeast District of the UFMCC. He suggested a platform plank which is roughly the same as the suggestion recently passed by the California Democratic Council. The hearing was held in Newport, R.I.

GAY RIGHTS NATIONAL LOBBY

Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL) has been chosen as the name of the new organization created to lobby for gay rights in Washington, D.C. The name was chosen in the Washington offices of the Universal Fellowship by a steering committee appointed by the delegates to the Advocate meeting in Chicago.

In a letter to all UFMCC members and friends, Rev. Roy Birchard and Adam DeBaugh of the UFMCC Washington office urged all MCC members to join the new organization.

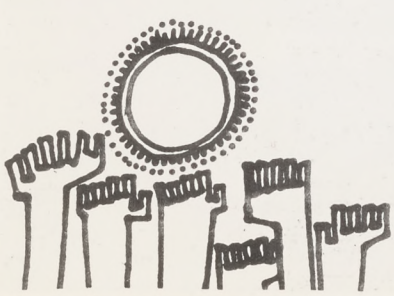
"Recent events have brought our Christian responsibility as MCCers to confront injustice into sharp focus. The Supreme Court's March 29 decision to uphold a state's right to make laws concerning the private, consensual adult sex acts of its citizens is a setback, but not a major defeat, for the movement toward liberty and equality that gay people seek.

"The UFMCC Washington office feels good about the impact we have been able to exercise so far in keeping Washington lobbying for gay rights open and honest. The Gay Rights National Lobby will not be putting the UFMCC Washington office out of business. Like most Christian denominations, there are services here in Washington we must go on providing for UFMCC members. But we see GRNL, Inc. as a necessary expansion of one aspect of what gay people must do in Washington.

"We urge you and all members and friends of MCC to join the Gay Rights National Lobby. Membership requests can be sent to our office at the following address: Gay Rights National Lobby, Inc. Suite 210, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002. Checks should be made payable to 'Gay Rights National Lobby, Inc.' or 'GRNL, Inc.' "

Categories of voting membership in Gay Rights National Lobby:

$15. Member
$25. Sustaining Member
$100. Contributing Member
$250. Business Member
$500. Benefactor



SINDT DENIED CHURCH APPROVAL FOR GAY MINISTRY

The Rev. David Sindt, national coordinator of the Presbyterian Gay Caucus, has been denied the approval of the Chicago Presbytery for his work as a minister (among Chicago gay community).

In a formal complaint to the National General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Mr. Sindt claimed that the action of the Chicago governing body was "arbitrary and prejudicial."

Last fall, at the request of the Twin Cities, MN, Presbytery which had ordained him in 1965, Mr. Sindt was granted permission to carry on a special ministry in Chicago. Later it was rescinded because the presbytery could see "no grounds for granting permission for Rev. Sindt to labor within its bounds in a volunteer position with an organization (Presbyterian Gay Caucus) which has no ecclesiastical status or recognition."

Mr. Sindt has the support of his home church in St. Paul, the Twin Cities Presbytery, and the church where he worships in Chicago.

NOW SUPPORTS LESBIANS

Equal rights for Lesbians was given top priority status at the National Organization for Women conference held in Philadelphia recently.

The tone of the conference reflected a very real change in attitudes within the organization toward Lesbians. Numerous candidates for national NOW offices addressed a group of over 300 lesbians. Almost fifty percent of NOW national officers elected at the convention are open lesbians. Re-elected president Karen DeCrow made a public apology to lesbians for past internal NOW oppression and discrimination.

In an important resolution, the NOW Lesbian/Sexuality Task Force will receive no less than one percent of NOW's national dues (roughly $5000). The money will be used for issues of concern to Lesbians on local, state and federal levels, including the federal Gay Civil Rights Bill: HR 5452.

INTEGRITY CONVENTION

INTEGRITY, the national organization for Gay Episcopalians and their friends, has announced plans for their Second Annual Convention to be held August 5-8 in San Francisco. Theme of the programs will be, "Hear What The Spirit Is Saying To The Churches!" Both ecumenical and interdisciplinary in scope, clergy and lay people in a variety of professions are being invited to participate.

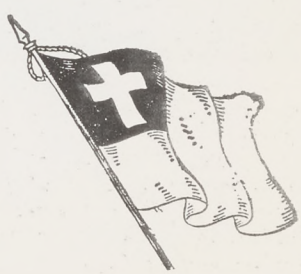
According to the Rev. Richard G. Younge, Convenor of the host Chapter, "An attempt will be made to present some of the recent insights of the social and behavioral sciences, the arts, and theology into the Gay condition and experience, and to explore how the Church might use this knowledge in reordering and developing its ministry to Gays." Other denominational groups are being asked to send clergy and lay representatives.

In conjunction with the news from San Francisco, President Jim Wickliff announced that the 1976 INTEGRITY Annual Award will be presented to Barbara Gittings, a pioneer in the Gay Liberation Movement, and founder/Chairperson of the Task Force on Gay Liberation, American Library Association's Social Services Round Table.

"Personally, I'm delighted with this choice," Said Wickliff. "The Gay community is blest with an impressive number of excellent leaders, but few have served it longer or with more love and dedication than Barbara."

The Annual Award Program was instituted by INTEGRITY to honor persons making outstanding contributions to a better understanding of homosexuality. Theologian Dr. W. Norman Pittenger and Dr. Louie Crew, founder and Editor of *Integrity: Gay Episcopal Forum* were presented duplicate awards at the first annual convention held last year in Chicago.

Program schedules, speakers' names and other details will be announced later this spring. For more information, contact INTEGRITY/San Francisco, P.O. Box 6444, San Jose, CA 95150.



PAT UNDERWOOD, Morris Kight, Rev. Sandmire, Rev. Perry answer a reporter's questions at a news conference regarding the Supreme Court decision asserting states' rights to make laws abridging the right to privacy.

MORRIS KIGHT, Rev. Perry, Tom McGough, Mike Manning, Dr. Larry Auten, Larry Reh, and Max Harris, jubilant over the decision of the Los Angeles Police Commission barring discrimination against hiring gay people as police.

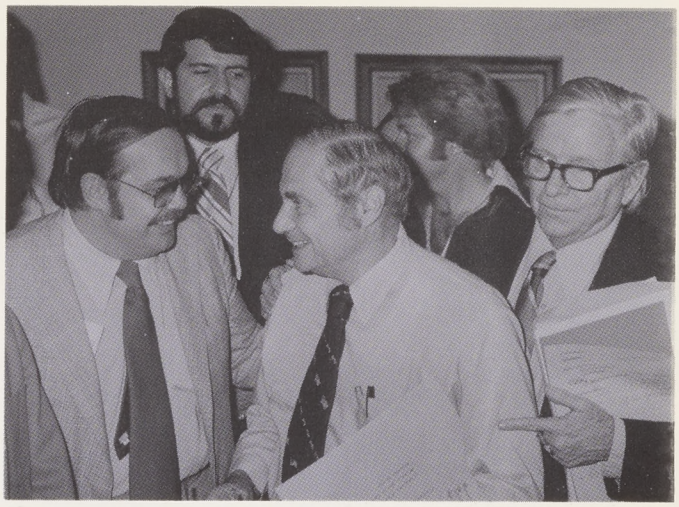
TONY SULLIVAN, Richard Adams are joined by Daniel Padnos in Press Conference after the Immigration Department's statement that "a bona fide marital relationship cannot exist between two faggots."

REV. JAMES SANDMIRE, Dean Doolittle, Mike Manning, Rev. Joan Johnson at demonstration on steps of Federal Building supporting Tony Sullivan's immigration plea.

CHRISTIANS IN ACTION

These photos by Pat Rocco record some of the noteworthy events in the area of social action in recent months in southern California. In every instance MCC members and friends participated.

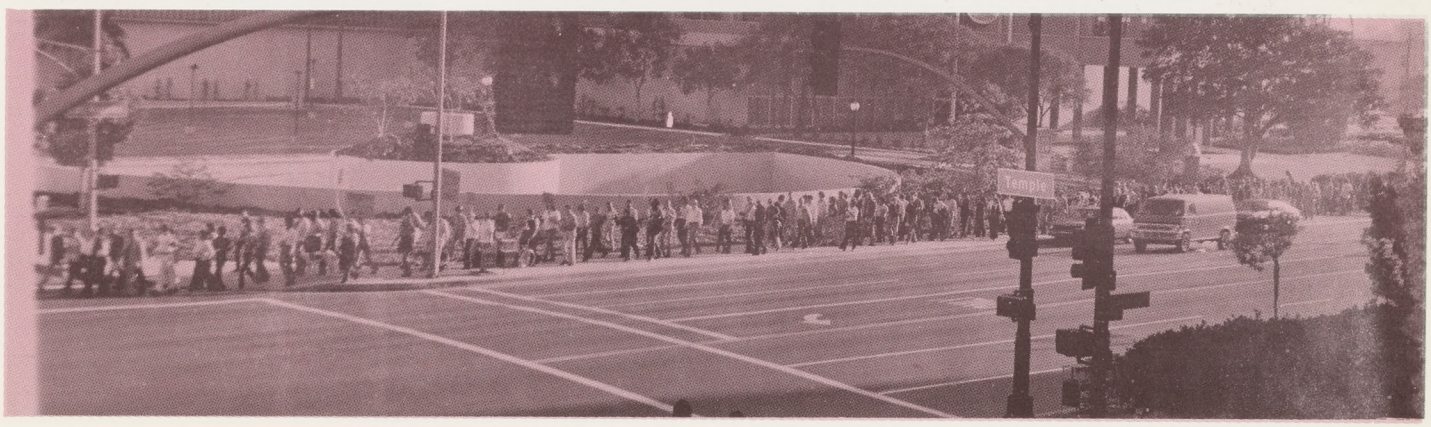
ATTORNEY TOM COLEMAN of the Gay Person's Alliance and Editor of SexualLawReporter; Larry Rey, aid to Councilwoman Peggy Stevenson; Jim Long; Rev. Perry; Jim Kepner, gay activist and gay historian at a state Fair Employment Practices Commission hearing in which they called for statute legislation banning discrimination against gay people in hiring. Along with gender, race, religion and age, they would add sexual orientation or affectional preference. Jim Long, now program director of the Los Angeles Gay Community services Center, testified regarding his denial of a promotion in a Los Angeles bank because of his affectional preference.



DAVE GLASCOCK, gay aid to Los Angeles County Supervisor, Ed Edleman; Rev. Perry; Tony Sullivan; Morris Kight, at a meeting with (then) presidential hopeful, Gov. Milton Shapp of Pennsylvania.

CRAIG CARLTON, Chip Garcia, Rev. Perry, Morris Kight, Rev. Robert Sirico, Joe McDuffy, Spider Luton, leading 500 people in a "Goodbye Ed" silent candlelight demonstration which ended in front of the Hollywood police station, in a strong show of community sentiments towards Ed Davis as Los Angeles police chief.

PART OF THE SEVERAL HUNDRED people, many from MCC, who marched from MCC Los Angeles to the Federal Building supporting Tony Sullivan and Richard Adams in their struggle to have their legal marriage recognized by immigration authorities as a basis for Tony's naturalization.



Pastor Randy Cypherd and members and friends of MCC in the (San Fernando) Valley participate in the 1975 Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade. Rev. Elder Perry and MCC congregations from all over California also participated. — Photo by Pat Rocco.

LOS ANGELES PARADE OKAYED FOR JULY 4th!

The Los Angeles Polic Commission voted unanimously March 25 to approve the request of a gay organization to hold the only parade approved down Hollywood Boulevard on July 4th of America's Bicentennial year.

Morris Kight, a spokesman for the Christopher Street West Association, said this year's Gay Pride Parade would mark both the nation's 200th birthday and the Christopher Street confrontation seven years ago between gay people and the police of New York City.

Kight said the commission's action was vastly different this year than several years ago when the organization had to go to court in order to obtain a permit to hold a parade marking the anniversary of that Stonewall Riot in New York.

Kight and CSWA President Sharon Cornelison, member of MCC LA, and Pat Rocco, the photographer and producer, had filed the petition several months earlier and had been assured they were the first to file.

Kight said 1500 marched in the 1970 parade with 35,000 watching. Last year's June parade was seen by thousands.

Meanwhile, in New York, the Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day Parade will be held June 27. The decision was reached in a "Town Meeting" in that city earlier this year, held, by the way, in the sanctuary of the Church of the Beloved Disciple, a church friendly to the gay community.

In a column in *Newswest*, John Paul Hudson, author of *The Gay Insider*, writes, "The decision of the approximately 160 persons voting in the essentially happy conclave was that we would hold on to June 27 as our big day, but wholeheartedly back the New York State Coalition of Gay Activists and National Coalition of Gay Activists in their efforts to creat a militant presence in both New York and Kansas City (for the Democratic and Republican National Conventions)."

Hudson sees the purpose of these parades to be "to show our solidarity, to demonstrate our fury at being denied our constitutional rights due to the continuing collusion of 'church' and state, and exhibit our beauty in diversity."

The New York City Parade is consistently the largest of the Gay Pride Parades. Rev. Troy Perry has accepted an invitation to participate in the New York parade this year. ●

GAYS ON THE HILL: Gay civil rights legislation pending before the United States Congress is being discussed on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, by (from left to right) Craig Thigpen, openly gay aide to Congresswoman Bella Abzug of New York, Gary Aldridge, openly gay legislative assistant to Sen. Alan Cranston of California, the Rev. Troy D. Perry, founder and moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), and Adam DeBaugh, assistant director of UFMCC's Washington office and editor of its newsletter, *Gays On The Hill.* ●

THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church

WHAT GIVES US THE AUTHORITY TO BE AND BECOME THE CHURCH?

–WILSON p5

I WANT TO SPEAK OF HOW PASSION IS SO TERRIBLY FEARED, LONGED FOR HATED AND ADMIRED BY THE ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

–HEYWARD p2

MCC MUST PRESS FOR THE LIBERATION OF ALL PEOPLE AND GROUPS, FOR THEIR CAUSE IS OUR CAUSE

–PULING p11

MAY 1976

PASSION and the church

by CARTER HEYWARD

An address delivered at a National Gay Task Force forum on Gays and the Religious Community in March in New York.

I'VE DONE A lot of thinking about what it is I want to say. I've thought about feminism, homosexuality, lesbianism; about helping build a foundation for "Theology of sexuality"; about levelling an indictment against the Church and the Judaic tradition, in which the Church is rooted, for what is at best gross irresponsibility in dominant ecclesiastical attitudes toward sexuality, sex, and homosexuuality. I've attemted to sift through my own reflections in order to focus on, and share with you, that which is for me most basic to a discusssion of "feminism, homosexuality, and the church" (the topic suggested to me).

I want to speak of *passion*, and of how passion is, historically, so terribly feared, yearned for, hated, and admired by the ecclesiastical authority of the Church. The Church, which has over the years come to manifest itself as a passionless institution – a body without depth; without intensity of experience, involvement, relationship, life, and death; an institution without passion. The Church, that which has traditionally fed itself on fear of passion; that which has consistently and predictably disclaimed its own hidden passion; that which has located and sought out its own passion elsewhere, and denounced "queers" with passion, making us scapegoats; virtually the bearers of the passion of the Church. This has been especially true, in recent years as well as long ago, of feminist women and of self-acknowledged, self-celebrating homosexuals; those who are "gay and proud."

Passion is deep-quality living – like diving in and swimming instead of wading. Passion is in or out of bed. It's in homosexuals, heterosexuals, and bisexuals. It's in celibates and genitally active women and men.

That we who are female and/or gay have come to symbolize passion is in its own way a tribute to us. It is, in fact, a tribute that many of us do not merit, for there are of course many women (gay and straight) and many gay men who are not passionate people. But in the mind of the Church – Roman Catholic, Protestant, Episcopal – we are viewed as the archetypal carrier of passion. We are seen collectively as the character for whom Equus is God and lover: The boy who relates orgiastically – with sweat, panting, screams, and semen – to the created world around him. We are blown up into child-devouring monster proportions: She/He who lives to lure, seduce, destroy whatever is pure, hence good.

And all around us, those who fear passion in themselves project it onto us – us women and gays, who in many cases also fear the one, or ones, on whom its passion has been projected. The Church has, historically, projected its passion onto *women* and homosexuals – equating passion with sex, and "broads" and passion in ourselves and have nowhere to project it; so we swallow it; and like all fear that is swallowed whole, it contributes to our psychological indigestion, which for women has been classically labeled "neurotic depression" and for gays "inversion." And people gawk at us and name us names not of our choosing – names like "chick" and "doll" and "broad" and "fag" and "femme" and "butch" and "queer." They name us names for so long that we begin to answer when we are called, to jump when the finger snaps, believing these names to be our own.

We women and gays have become a terrifying "other,"a passionate "not me" to many practicing heterosexual men and women; to many self-denying, self-denigrating gay people who cannot celebrate themselves because they have learned well to despise themselves; to many people writhing in the tension between active genitals and celibates psyches; and conversely to people caught in conflict between celibate genitals and sexually active psyches.

The Passion of Jesus – a term that has traditionally marked the period of time between, and including, the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, was exactly that: A time during which Jesus bore the passion of his time, his culture, his religious heritage: Jesus, one through whose passion his friends began to recognize their own; Jesus, for whom being human involved immersion in choices of

Carter Heyward was among the first eleven women ordained to the priesthood of the Episcopal Church in July, 1974. She is a member of the faculty at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass.

real life and real death; Jesus, the passionate – lover of brothers and sisters, man of many moods, person for whom all relationships was a challenge, hence a threat, to those around him who were willing to settle for less than passion. less than living life and dying death (and the two do and must go together), less than being full, abundant, electric with contemplative and relational energy, less than becoming impassioned about matters of justice and dignity. Jesus, the compelling and terrifying Christ, to whom people are often drawn and from whom we simultaneously step back. Because our guts assure us that people of passion are people who are, in the words of my dad, "just askin' for a lickin'!" Passion is hard to take, and so passionate people get clobbered. Like Jesus.

Taking cues from the culture that crucified Jesus, the Church

ALL AROUND US, THOSE WHO FEAR PASSION IN THEMSELVES PROJECT IT ONTO US — US WOMEN AND GAYS, WHO IN MANY CASES ALSO FEAR PASSION IN OURSELVES AND HAVE NOWHERE TO PROJECT IT; SO WE SWALLOW IT . . .

cultivates passionless people – more accurately, people who must deny their passion – their full capacities for life and death – in order to be acceptable as priests, ministers, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, people, period – in the Church and in the rest of society. The Church has hailed the dispassionate Logos, Word of the Patriarchal Lord governing His earthly Manor, whose sterile and often rather pallid Son was born painlessly by an untouched Virgin, as that which is divine. That which is not-God – not the One in whose we are created; that which is, for Christians, "not-me" – has been branded as Satanic, demonic, evil, – passionate. You may recall that early Church Fathers believed that evil, woman, and sex were virtually the same passionate phenomenon. In other words, "evil," "woman," "sex," and "passion" were different names for the same

THE PASSION OF JESUS . . . WAS EXACTLY THAT: A TIME DURING WHICH JESUS BORE THE PASSION OF HIS TIME . . .

experience – the same demon – against which holy men believed they had to contend for the sake of an antiseptic God, in whose pure image they were said to be and whose Fatherly work they strove to do – namely, the indictment and salvation of passionate souls. Our sophistication notwithstanding, things are today not all that different.

What does this mean for us, now, in the Church? It means, I believe, that the ordination of women and homosexuals; the ERA. equal pay, equal employment opportunity, and equal rights for homosexuals and women – within and without the Church – are worthy goals. It also means that, while these goals for basic rights are good ones, it is imperative that those of us involved in these struggles keep clearly in mind that the attainment of such goals (in small and large ways; in the short- and long-run) is, in itself, not enough. Ordaining women is not enough. Blessing gay relationships is not enough. Open housing for homosexuals and qual employment for women are, in themselves, not enough. For women priests and gay relationships have been; every bit as devoid of depth, humor, pain, joy, fullness of life and fullness of death. We want more than this.

What we in the Church must be about, I am convinced, is a return to religion of passion – a way of being in which anything less than spilling-over with the Spirit of God is not enough; spilling over with tender toughness in our daily work and play, with righteous and active indignation at injustice, with careful caring for others and self, with courage to

. . . JESUS, FOR WHOM BEING HUMAN INVOLVED IMMERSION IN CHOICES OF REAL LIFE AND REAL DEATH

stand up and be counted – when it counts; spilling over with integrity in relationship, with awareness and spirit that we really can't understand. As Chris Williamson shares her passion, "Filling up and spilling over" – with the passion of Jesus. Religion of passion. This is where we are going, I hope, and I believe –within or without the religious institutitions we have known.

I bring this to a close on a rather personal note. A fair number of my ecclesiastical brothers "accuse" me of being a "radical feminist," a "lesbian," a "witch," an "anarchist," and sometimes a "revolutionary." These angry brothers do not realize what compliments they pay me! They do not realize (nor do they care to realize) to what a long, strong line of passionate women they allude when they toss

WHAT WE IN THE CHURCH MUST BE ABOUT, I AM CONVINCED, IS A RETURN TO RELIGION OF PASSION — A WAY OF BEING IN WHICH ANYTHING LESS THAN SPILLING-OVER WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS NOT ENOUGH . . .

these epithets at my sisters and me. They do not know (nor do they care to know) the strength and sensitivity of women who have cared more about honesty than seduction, and who have known that love without justice is no love at all. Those who curse at us do not see (nor do they open their eyes to see) the creative caring of women who have loved themselves not as shadowed, half-relfections of so-called "male egos" but as a human being created in the image of God of POWER, of WHOLENESS, and of PASSION — HOLY God. The men who fear us have not felt (nor have they dared to feel) the wise caring of women who love women and men not as sex objects, but as sister and brothers sojourners along a common way.

No, those who call me names, thinking they do me harm, do not

know of whom, or to whom, they really speak. They do not know me, and they shall not know me so cheaply. They do not know Mary, the mother of Jesus, woman of strong will, who stood in defiance of Jewish custom, Mary the strong mother of Jesus; they do not know Sappho, eloquent Sappo, who empowered those conceived and cultivated specifically to be powerless. They do not know Sojourner Truth, wise old Sojourner whose truth cut through the crap of the ecclesiastical and educational elitism that booed her, and issued forth in relationship between black and white, poor and rich, women and women – as sisters. My frightened brothers do not hear (nor do they try to hear) what Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas were saying to each other. They do not hear the passion. Of the Pankhursts, Virginia Woolf, Amelia Earhardt, Mother Jones, the One and the Many who have cooked the meals, sewn the gardens and the clothes; who have borne the children, contemplated in convents, worked in factories, fought in wars (alas); made love to sisters and to brothers in spirit and sometimes in body too; who have read and written and learned and taught and cared and paid and cried and held on and held up those around them – and then have had to stand there and listen to men tell them that they are unfit, too weak, or too emotional to be taken seriously this time.

Those who say these things to us and behind our backs may, one day, any day, today, open their eyes and see that we move on. We are sojourning. We are not held back. And when the frightened people see that this is so, they will either shrivel up and die on the spot, or they will journey with us, rejoicing so, into the unknown, further into conscousness – faith – whose soul in Passion. Blessed be Passion, the daughter and son of God.

FEEDBACK: letters & responses

Truisms of Androgyny

THE ARTICLE ON androgynous sexuality by Paul Barstow in the March '76 issue of *The Gay Christian* was of interest to me if only for the fact that I'm currently preparing an article on the same topic for another journal. I wanted to see whether Dr. Barstow had any new angle on the subject. He did not. The article is swollen with prosaic statements in the passive voice.

As an out-front gay person I have always harbored a sneaking suspicion about defenses of the so-called "bisexual" lifestyle clothed as defenses of a theoretical androgyny. Such arguments conjure up an image in the back of my mind of a professional person – a would-be gay tied down perhaps to a marriage he half believes in – who is working out on paper his problem of conscience. What bothers his conscience is that he could really be free to lead a wholly gay life for himself but is afraid to go the risk.

Dr. Barstow's article is an androgynous hybrid in itself. He writes as though he can't make up his mind whether he wants to compose a formal scholarly paper or an informal piece of speculative journalism. The result is a self-conscious compromise that attempts forcibly to join the two genres together. The author may feel he does not want to bore the reader with academic flapdoodle, but then what is The Gay Christian for if it does not act as a scholarly forum for MCC? So maybe he figures he'll give his writing the tone of an armchair interview and end up talking down to the reader. This approach is unnecessary. Howard Wells' perfectly good scholarly piece appears a few pages further on. There is no hint of embarassment in Wells' paper, no need to justify its academic tone.

Dr. Barstow's pompous chit-chat was annoying to me because I sincerely wanted to be interested in what he had to say, but found he was frustrating my interest at every turn. If he had stuck to the usual format of a scholarly paper this would not have happened.

First, there's the name-dropping without footnotes. On p. 18 he drops the names Marcuse and Brown. A reasonably intelligent reader will assume he means *Herbert* Marcuse for the former, but what about the latter? Most likely it's *Norman O.* Brown. But, who knows?

Yes,it might make the article seem a little more formal to include footnotes. But I for one am *interested* in exactly what sources are being drawn upon. Then the error is compounded on p. 19 when Dr. Barstow quotes a certain Marc Fasteau. I have never heard of Fasteau and would like to know where this quotation comes from. It intrigues me! Once again my interest is foiled. I could not even find Fasteau listed in the "partial bibliography" at the end of the article.

MCC very much needs a scholarly journal in which a real MCC theology can be developed through scholarly discussion and articulated for the "lay" membership and the straight churches at large. The world is watching us, and being the cynical kind of place it is, it is watching to see where we will trip up. In order to establish credibility and respect for our position as gay Christians, we have to see to it that our standard are high – not impossibly exalted, but at least demanding a generally accepted norm of scholarly parlance. Articles written for TGC should not expect our indulgence. They should toe the line in the same way that articles submitted to any other scholarly church journal should.

That said, I can now compliment Dr. Barstow on his taste in literature. The lines from Shelley I thoroughly appreciated. Many church people have no feel for good poetry: look at all those thousands of godawful tacky hymn lyrics they produced in the nineteenth century alone! For me the poetry almost makes up for the faults of this article as a whole. It pulls together a great many turisms that would certainly help to educate the sort of person who has never stopped to think seriously about androgyny before. But truisms are just not true enough.

Keith Brown
Hartford

By What Authority?

NANCY WILSON

THE QUESTION of authority is central to the Christian faith. It is a Biblical-theological-historical and practical dilemma for the Church. The issue of authority pervades and underlies all discussion of scripture, theology, ethics and church polity. It is central because it is one point at which theological and practical concerns converge. I am concerned with 1) How do we understand the concept of authority in the Christian sense; 2) What are sources of authority for the Church; 3) and how does this apply to MCC as a church?

The issue of authority is a prominent feature of Israel's history, as recorded in the Old Testament. Who is the God of Israel? What is the nature and purpose of this God and of this God's authority? Who speaks for God? What is the relationship of human authority to divine authority? These are still important and relevant questions for the Church today.

In the New Testament, one of the questions most often asked of Jesus (by establishment religious people) was "By what authority do you do these things?" Jesus challenged the religious authorities of his day, and reminded them of the source of true authority. The early Church (see particularly the book of Acts) was also confronted with the question of authority: "*By what power, or by what name do you do these things?*" It is Gamaliel, a very wise and respected Pharisee who gives the most articulate answer to proof of authority:

> "Men of Israel, be cautious in deciding what to do with these men. . . I tell you, leave them alone. For if this idea of theirs or its execution is of human origin, it will collapse, but if it is from God, you will never be able to put them down, and you risk finding yourselves at war with God."
>
> Acts 5:35,38-39

It is a shame that the Christian Church has never learned to follow that advice. Crusades and Inquisitions have marred the Church and filled it with hypocrisy about its understanding of its authority in relationship to a loving God.

St. Paul was often challenged about the authenticity of his apostleship, even from within the early Church; and concern about true and false prophets was an important factor.

I believe that it is also possible to look at the entire history of the Christian Church from the perspective of the question of authority. Certainly the development of a canon of scripture involved making decisions as to what writings were authoritative and what writings were not. The Reformation grew out of a theological debate over the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church. The questioning of the Church's authority paralleled the questioning of the entire medieval feudal order.[1] As the Reformation grew as a movement, the authority of scripture was lifted up, as over against the authority of Church tradition and law. Almost every religious reformation has its roots in a questioning of accepted sources and symbols of authority.

What are the sources of authority for the Christian faith? Church law and tradition? Scripture? The individual conscience? The Spirit?

What gives us in MCC the authority to be and become the church? What gave Troy Perry the right, or authority to call into being a church with a special ministry to gay people? These are all questions we must take seriously.

Furthermore, we must recognize that we live in an age where respect for secular and religious authority has been severly eroded. The very word "authority" is distasteful to many people. Every institution and source of authority is being questioned and challenged and even threatened. We live in a secular age, where the authority of God is not assumed — where not even lip-service is paid to that idea. Many reject the *concept* of authority altogether. Intrinsic to this is the fact that authority is often equated with leadership, particularly institutional leadership; and, there is good reason for mistrust of political and religious leaders in our society.

A lot of these feelings come from misunderstanding about what authority is, where it comes from, how it functions, what its nature and purpose is. Although it is possible and sometimes necessary to reject a specific mode of authority, or a particular authority figure, it is not possible, in my opinion, to get rid of the concept. I believe that authority is a social, political, psychological and spiritual reality among human beings.

Before going any further, the word "authority" must be defined. Perhaps it is best to begin with the basic, literal, dictionary definitions: The root of the word "authority" is the Latin "auctor" which means "originator," "beginner," "creator." There are at least six basic definitions of "authority:"

1. The right to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues or disputes, the right to control, command or determine.
2. An accepted source of information, advice, etc.
3. Expert
4. Commanding influence
5. A warrant for action; justification
6. Testimony; witness

Basically, these are all secular interpretations of the word. Often, theologians and church bureacrats accept the purely secular definitions, and just apply those to the Church, assuming

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that God is the "originator" of that kind of authority. Robert Bryant, in *The Bible's Authority Today*, defines authority in terms of "Lordship" or "over-against-ness" -- God is the final power we come up against, who demands our obedience. God is our authority in the sense that "whatever one acknowledges as rightfully and worthily commanding one's obedience and loyalty" is true authority.[2]

In a sense, Bryant is right. However, I agree with John McKenzie (author of *Authority in the Church*), that the concept of authority has a very different and specific meaning in the context of our Christian faith.

The nature of authority in the Christian sense is dependent on the nature of our God. Our God is self-giving and self-revealing *love*. Therefore, in a very basic sense, Christian authority must be a function of that love.

Truly, God's ways are often *not* our ways. Secular understanding of authority is filled with all sorts of assumptions. There is the assumption that authority has a tendency to become absolute — absolutely powerful, and unconcerned with those in its charge. We have inherited, in our culture, a patriarchal understanding of authority (which the Church, unfortunately, has adopted) which divides those in authority from those under authority; which sees life in terms of dominance and submission, coercion and control. The problem is that, too often the Church has not seen Christian authority as a function of love among equals, but has sold out to the secular model of authority and power. McKenzie points out that:

> "One can conceive of two dangers to the unity and the integrity of the Church: anarchy and the secularization of power. Of the two, Jesus spoke very little about the dangers of anarchy; he spoke frequently and earnestly about the dangers of the secularization of power."[3]

We must always remember, says McKenzie, that Jesus Christ was, is and always will be the only Head of the Church; and Jesus Christ demonstrated to us a revolution in the concept of power and authority:

> "Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus. For the divine nature was his from the first; yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself, and in obedience accepted even death — death on a cross. Therefore God raised him to the heights and bestowed on him the name above all names. . ."
>
> Philippians 2:5-9

As Christians, we understand ourselves to be the Body of Christ. Says McKenzie, "The Church must be Christ and she (sic.) must know what Christ is."[4] Jesus Christ became for us the "diakonos" (more than "servant," it means "lackey," "menial," or "slave") of our salvation.[5] Power and authority, in a Christian sense, means the power to love, to sacrifice, to serve one another. Those in authority are commissioned as servants to the rest of the Church. And, furthermore, everyone who is in a position of authority in the Church is responsible to the *whole* Church, to the whole Body of Christ. It means colleagiality, not coercion or control.

Finally, according to McKenzie, "The ultimate authority (for the Church) is always the living, risen Christ, identified with the whole Church."[6] I would like to interject at this point that John McKenzie is a Jesuit scholar, and it becomes obvious that his very Biblical understanding of authority is very much at odds with the history of authority in the Roman Catholic Church. In a time when the authority of the Pope and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church is being challenged, he has tried to provide a Biblical basis for change.

C. H. Dodd, in his book, *The Authority of the Bible*, says that, "The ultimate authority is truth itself".[7] The last dictionary definition of authority is "testimony," or "witness." For Christians, authority comes from our testimony or witness to the truth that sets us free — the truth of God's revelation to us in Jesus Christ. It is this revelation and the way of life it commends to us that is authoritative; and no earthly power can either enforce that, or take it away. It is the truth itself that must be compelling, and not our institutionalization of it. The way we (the universal Church) have structured, over-structured and institutionalized our doctrine, ethics, and church organization, one would think that *we* thought that the truth of the gospel is so unconvincing that we have to continually prop it up!

It is obvious to me that so few people really understand what it means to be the Church. At one of our recent District Conferences, one man started making an analogy between our national government and how we should govern ourselves. He had a hard time understanding the difference between a secular government and how we should govern ourselves as the Church of Jesus Christ. Many Church governments resemble medieval feudalism, or autocratic monarchies. But the Church should be even more democratic than any secular government. And there must be an underlying trust that we share the same God and the same mission.

One woman in our pre-membership class finally understood. She said, "All those years I thought *they* (the clergy and church hierarchy) were the Church and we were the people — often just spectators. But now see — *we* are the Church, all of us together."

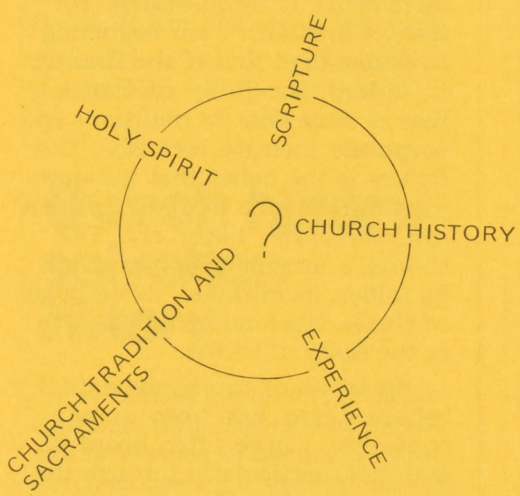
If we are truly to proclaim the gospel, we must begin to see authority as a function of the good news of God's love. In order to do that, we need to understand who God is, we need to trust each other, communicate, and be accountable to one another; and we need to become each others' servants.

Perhaps no question plagues fractured Christendom as much as "What is the source of our knowledge of God? Who or what is authoritative in terms of our understanding of God and the mission of the gospel?"

Our God is one God, but all of us who believe in God know that God can be experienced in a variety of ways. Some of those

ways are very personal and mysterious, and others are corporate and dynamic. The point is, there is not just one way of learning about, or knowing God, or feeling God's presence.

Some people rely on one method of knowing God, almost to the exclusion of others. One cry of the Reformation became "sola scriptura", or, "only through scripture can we know God." Many fundamentalist groups rely solely on scripture. The Roman Catholic Church at one time said that outside of the tradition and sacraments of the Catholic Church there is no salvation. The Quakers emphasize the "inner light" of God-consciousness; and Pentecostals emphasize the gift of the Holy Spirit. To an open-minded Christian, it might look like this:



Fine, you might say. Isn't it wonderful to have so many authoritative sources for our faith and way of life. It is fine, except that what does one do when two or more of these sources apparently conflict?

First, I would like to deal with each of these sources separately:

Scripture

Obviously, scripture is, and has always been one of the most important sources of our faith as Christians. That is why it is important for us to understand the nature and purpose and proper use of scripture. As gay Christians, we have all become painfully aware that proof-texting (quoting scripture out of context) can be the instrument of the Devil, and can be used as much in hate and ignorance as in love. Nevertheless, many persons, even in our churches, continue to use scripture in an uninformed way. And I mean *use* — because, unfortunately, people can quote scripture only to support their own unexamined prejudices, and will not let scripture speak to them. The temptation, when scripture is thrown at us, is to throw some back; but I feel that that can be ultimately self-defeating. What happens to us when we become like those who throw scripture at us (as if it were a sword or a brick, and not the instrument of God's love)? Rather than engage in that kind of game, should we not be a witness to the basic message of the gospel? What *is* necessary for us to do is to understand the basic, essential and profound truths of scripture, which can be overlooked when we just quote scripture out of context.

Some people see scripture in a semi-magical way. In fact, some people come close to worshipping scripture instead of God. A professor of mine used to call this "Bibliolatry." (I am finding that not all persons who label themselves "fundamentalists" feel this way.) Says C. F. Evans, "The desire for infallibility, short of the infallibility of God, be it of Church or Bible, is an idolatrous lust."[8]

I think it is important to clarify some basic issues. For the most part, I agree with C. H. Dodd when he says: "God is the Author not of the Bible, but of the life in which the authors of the Bible partake, and of which they tell in such imperfect human words as they command."[9] The mystery, says Dodd, is that Almighty God would use imperfect words and people to convey eternal truth. It is that same mystery that we celebrate in the incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. It is part of God's love for us, that God allows Him/Herself to be revealed at all — and that the Eternal can be revealed in human words and human beings does not undermine God's authority, but exposes it for what it is: a function of *love*.

I believe that scripture was inspired by God, and written by persons who loved God. However, I cannot believe that every word in scripture is equally inspired, nor that every word is literally true or worthy of acceptance. There are Psalms which ask God to trample our enemies; and that is not acceptable in terms of the gospel. Certainly, the authors of scripture did not intend to write, for instance, a scientific account of Creation — nor should we expect them to. Although we can learn from everything in scripture, not all parts are equally well written, or profound or inspired as other parts. The belief that every word of scripture must be *literally* true to contain truth is actually a 19th Century understanding of truth. That kind of *rigid* fundamentalism (or, unreconstructed fundamentalism, as I have heard it called), "is the product of an age which assumes that there is only one kind of truth, and only one vehicle of truth."[10]

When Old Testament or New Testament writers speak of homosexuality, for instance, they obviously did not always know what they were talking about. They did not experience the love of God that can be experienced in a deep, loving relationship between two gay persons. Obviously, in the minds of Biblical writers, all homosexuality was merely lust, and not love. Our experience, as gay people, has taught us differently.

One of my Biblical professors said, "truly, the Holy Spirit spoke through St. Paul. But sometimes the Holy Spirit stopped speaking and Paul kept writing."[11]

Certainly, scripture, and an understanding of the essential truth it contains, is a vital and irreplacable factor in our faith as Christians. However, unless we believe that revelation ceased as of the first Century, there are other sources of God's authority that

often function as correctives to the limitations and inadequacies of scripture. I remember, in college, sitting in on a discussion. One person piously pointed to the Bible and said, "It's *all* here, it's *all* here!" And another person quietly responded, "No, it's not all there, it's also in here," pointing to herself and to the gathered community.

The holy spirit

Truthfully, not until I became involved in MCC did I have any idea of what the meaning of this "third person of the Trinity" was. It was never mentioned in my former church. I was not taught to be open to the movement of God's Spirit in my life: I had to learn that on my own, and, eventually, through MCC. The Holy Spirit is the same Spirit which moved in Creation, and which re-creates the image of God in each of us, and in us corporately as the Body of Christ. The problem (which is also a gift) is that the Spirit involves our feeling as well as our intellect, and feelings are often harder to define and analyze than words.

William Barclay, author of *The Promise of the Spirit*, describes God's Spirit in this way: "It is the Spirit who reveals God's truth to men (sic.), it is the Spirit who brings men into the presence of the truth; it is the Spirit who enables men to recognize the truth when they see it."[12] McKenzie says that, "In common thought and language authority means power. In the Church, the power of authority is identified with the Spirit."[13]

David McGuire, in Callahan's *God, Jesus and the Spirit*, deals extensively with the Holy Spirit and Church authority. He gives some information and insight into the early Church, and how, as the Church grew older, it relied less on the Spirit and more on Church structure and hierarchy. Whenever a church has been in conflict (as churches are, today, over many issues), one can sense the stirring of that Spirit again. And the Spirit always moves in the direction of the Kingdom vision. The Spirit is God's presence and power (the power of love) among us, revealing to us more of the truth. In the hymn, "Once to Every Man and Nation" there is a stanza that goes: New occasions teach new duties, Time makes ancient good uncouth; They must upward still and onward Who would keep abreast of truth. The Kingdom of God is yet to be fulfilled! There is work, and growing and change to be done, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is God's creative power among us, it is the source of our visions and dreams, and of the strength to turn those dreams, into realities. McKenzie says that the Spirit is the "vital element in the authority of the Church." and that "the Spirit always speaks to the *whole* Church."[14] The Spirit is unpredictable — it does not only speak to church officials and clergy, but to any Christian who opens up to God's presence. The gift of the Spirit is the affirmation of the church's openness to God's presence and God's will.

The Spirit cuts through the secularization of power, and reaffirms the power of God's love among us. The Spirit is both an equalizer and an energizer for the Body of Christ.

Some churches have attempted to live by the Spirit alone, without taking seriously either scriptural foundations or the historical tradition and witness of the Church. This can result in anarchy, of the "everybody does their own thing" variety, and in corporate irresponsibility. But as McKenzie points out, the danger of this happening is less than the constant trend towards secularization of power and authority.

Church tradition. sacraments

This source of knowledge of God and God's authority is most clearly important to the Roman Catholic and Anglican communions. However, every church values its own tradition and understanding of the sacraments. Through my readings, and my interaction with Catholics and Anglicans, I am gaining a better understanding and appreciation of the extent to which Church tradition and canon law and the sacraments is authoritative for many Christians. I am beginning to understand that if the Church is, indeed, the Body of Christ, then it must take its traditions and corporate identity serously. The fallacy is the belief that because the Church is the Body of Christ it can, therefore, never err. The Church's unwillingness to admit its follies, its mistakes, its betrayal of Christ, has hindered its growth *as* the Body of Christ.

In terms of the sacraments, I believe there has been some confusion. I have often heard it said that, particularly through the sacraments, the Church is the mediator between God and the people. But scripture says that Jesus Christ is our only mediator, that the Church *is* the people, and that, through the sacraments we *become* the living Body of Christ on earth. Through the sacraments we are all reconciled to God, and God becomes present to us.

In any case, the sacraments (whether you recognize seven or two) are important. They are another very important way that we corporately experience God's presence and love for us. One thing I disliked about my church of origin (Methodist) was the extreme individualism of Holy Communion. One sat in the pew, ate the bread and drank the grape juice, and there was nothing

corporate about it, other than the fact that we were doing it simultaneously. I deeply appreciate and treasure the corporate way in which we communicate at communion in MCC. It is not possible for an individual *alone* to be transformed into the Body of Christ. It is our *sharing* that enables the transformation.

To Roman Catholics, the canon law of the Church is as authoritative as scripture. I suppose that as long as it is never absolutized, and if it is always understood that *grace* precedes law, I can appreciate human attempts to interpret the will of God. Obviously, the danger is that the formulation of law tends to degenerate into legalism, where law is not a means to an end, but becomes the end itself. When canon law supercedes both scripture and the movement of the Spirit, it can become a millstone around our necks, and impedes the coming of the Kingdom.

Church history. salvation history

A central theme of the Judeo-Christian faith is that God moves and is revealed in history. Just as much as there is a worldly history, there is a holy history (*Heilsgeschicte*) which moves through worldly history. We *can* learn from history, from the Church's history; and we can try to perceive where God has moved and is now moving in our corporate and individual lives. We can also take a critical view of Church history, and discover certain patterns which teach us about being human. One obvious pattern is the tendency of ideas and movements to become institutionalized, and to seek secualrization of power. This usually is accompanied by an increasing dependence on law, and less dependence on the Spirit. This is a very familiar pattern in Church history. The question remains: is it an inevitable pattern? Will, MCC for instance, eventually become like all other churches in terms of its institutionalization? Is it already becoming that way? Is institutionalization a necessity? Will there someday be a church that comes into being and challenges the oppressiveness of MCC? Can we be open enough to the Spirit so that we can change as history changes? Can we deal with and be open to visionaries and dissenters in our midst, so that the Spirit never abandons us? That is my hope.

And yet, if we know that the Church is not in any one church, perhaps we need not be so uptight about the survival of a particular church, as long as the Church, the Body of Christ, is alive and growing. I certainly think we need to be concerned about survival, but we must always ask, "survival for what?" I have heard people say that MCC is destined to bring the Church back to God. That always sounds a little smug to me. We are *not* the only "real" Christians in the world, nor are we the only true church. If God wishes to use us, and I pray that God will, that is wonderful. But we are still just *learning*, and we have so much work to do to build strong, self-consciously Christian local churches. Before we lead the rest of the Church back to God, we need to find out what that really means.

Particular churches, or individual Christians, can betray the gospel; but whenever that happens, the Church, the Body of Christ, always emerges, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to confront the institutional Church and redeem it. Thank God, no single church institution can contain or supress the Church universal, the Church triumphant. Wherever the gospel is preached and lived, there is the Church; and history teaches us that.

Personal experience. intelligence

Another way in which we can know God is through our own personal experiences, through our perseption of the Universe, of nature, of the world around us. I think it is probably true that, to see God through these things requires openness to faith as a prerequisite. Jesus told us to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." Some theologians have called this approach to theology, "Natural theology." Process theologians also put emphasis on the intellect and personal experience, and reflection on that experience. Some churches have chosen to lift up these sources of knowledge of God as the ultimate and most reliable sources (to some degreee this is true of the Quakers, the Anabaptists, and the Unitarians). Sometimes, as with the Quakers, personal experience, and the Holy Spirit are linked very closely together.

On the other hand, some churches have chosen to disregard personal experiences as unreliable or unimportant. I think that these factors are important, but that without the other correctives (scripture, Spirit, Church tradition and history) they may be hard to sort out and understand.

I know that God is present to me in the world of nature, and in the incredible expanses of the Universe. But I also know that one has to have a certain prior level of awareness to appreciate that. It was Elizabeth Barrett Browning who said: "Every bush is afire with God, but only he who sees takes off his shoes. The rest sit around and pluck blackberries." Many of us are so out of touch with both inner and outer mysteries, that the world holds no *wonder*, no awe for us.

I also know that God has touched me personally, many times in my life. And any such experience is "self-authenticating" in that only I know, fully, what it means to me. The testimony, love and concern of many people has profoundly influenced my life and my faith.

When I cam out as a gay

person, I felt free for the first time in my life. I felt that God was with me, and God affirmed and delighted in my freedom — which was a freedom to be truthful, to love, and to express that love with my heart and mind and soul and body which God had given me. Coming out was a gift. But to any individual, self-authenticating experience such as that needs to go one step further. Somehow, I had to be able to relate that to a community of people. I think the emergence of a community of gay Christians was the most dynamic thing that could have happened to me. I came together with people who were experiencing the same thing — we were coming out of our closets of shame and loneliness, and discovering each other. Paul Minear describes it very well: "The church was (is) most really the church when it experienced in dying the transition from existence as "no people" to existence as the "People of God."[15]

We have come from "no people" and are becoming the People of God. And that experience has been authoritative, *real*, for us. Lives have been changed. Miracles have happened, transformation and resurrection! We have emerged from hopelessness and lovelessness and have learned, together, how to hope and love. All this is happening as our people come to know the good news of God's love in a very personal way.

Back to one of the original questions: what do we do when two or more of these authoritative sources of knowledge of God conflict?

First of all, I think that God's will is *never* in conflict; but, as human beings, with human resources, *we* are often in conflict about God's will. It seems to me that nothing *basic* in scripture could be in conflict with the movement of the Spirit, the intention of the sacraments, the lessons of history, or authentic personal experience. Problems arise when we absolutize one of these, and refuse to see potential for human error and misunderstanding in each of these.

For instance, even though in a few isolated places, scripture clearly condemns homosexual behavior, scripture also affirms self-giving love. We can also see, even in terms of heterosexuality, that scripture does not provide us with a totally adequate understanding of sexuality. We know more today about sexuality than did the Biblical writers. We can see, in relationship to many issues, that Biblical writers often reflected the prejudices of their culture. Another corrective is that the Spirit is really moving in our church; and I think that we have enabled the awakening of such movement in other churches. Church tradition on this matter is being seriously questioned; and the history of the Chirch confirms our outrage and teaches us that we *can* be and become the church. Finally, our personal experiences have led us to believe that nothing so basic in us as our sexuality can be alien to God — in fact, that God loves us very much indeed.

We can apply the method of analysis to other issues, such as the role of women in the church, issues of racism, of violence and non-violence, of the relationship of the Church to the state. In terms of the women's issue, scripture is obviously predominantly patriarchal, and emerged from a patriarchal culture, and yet, scripture also gives us a vision of a non-patriarchal "Kingdom" of God, where, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female;" but where, "we are all one in Christ Jesus."

There is *no* one, final, earthly authority by which we can easily determine God's will. God alone is the final authority about God; and God is always revealed to us through human sources. As St Paul says, "Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me." (1 Cor 13:12). Furthermore, if we believe that Christian authority must be a function of God's love, then it follows that it cannot imitate secular models. Authority in the Church must be shared, must be a matter of collegiality. It must not stoop to threats or use of force — whether physical, economic, political or social. There are times when strong leadership is necessary, when decisions must be made. But always these things must be done in love — and I don't mean to make that sound easy. Love has its own power — and it is the only power which does not tend towards corruption. All who are in authority must be accessible, and open to feedback from the people. No earthly authority can be absolutized. It is sad when those in authority believe that only force and control will enable the Church to survive or reach its goals. Nothing could be more self-defeating.

As the Body of Christ, we all bear the burden of authority. The final authority in the Church is the *whole Body of Christ insofar as it is open to the will of God.* Through earnest prayer, communication and accountability; through study of the scriptures, theology, ethics, church history and tradition, and the world around us, we will be able to proclaim the gospel to the whole world with the authority of God's love.

NOTES

1 Bainton, Roland, *Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther* (this book helped me to understand the relationship of the religious movements to the political changes).
2 Bryant, *The Bible's Authority Today*, p. 156.
3 McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, p. 3.
4 Ibid. p. 23.
5 Ibid. p. 28.
6 Ibid. p. 69.
7 C. H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible*, p. 131.
8 C. F. Evans, "The Inspiration of the Bible," (*Interpreters' Bible*), p. 32.
9 C. H. Dodd, p. 18.
10 From a lecture in Old Testament Theology, given by Dr. Harrell Beck, Boston University School of Theology, Sept. 1972.
11 C. F. Evans, p. 31.
12 Barclay, *Promise of the Spirit*, p. 22.
13 McKenzie, p. 55.
14 Ibid. p. 53.
15 Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, p. 260.

OUR BROTHER MARTIN LUTHER KING

by JEFFREY PULLING

LAST JANUARY 15, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., would have been 47 years old. He was only 39 when he was killed. I would like for us in MCC to consider this man as an example for us: a champion for the liberation of oppressed people, a pioneer in using non-violence to achieve justice, a Christian minister, and a modern-day saint. King has been considered by some to be a skillful politician, a clever opportunist, an agitator for trouble, and a "dirty old man," but whatever you may think of him, he has had a profound effect on our world. He got the ball rolling. He brought the struggles of people to be free from oppression right into the forefront of American life, and things have not been the same since.

King did what he did because he felt called by God to act. If he had not responded to this call, it is open to question whether there would be any movement for Gay liberation today. If it had not been for King, MCC might not even exist. Why is this? I am not suggesting that King was a proponent of Gay rights, although with his sensitivity and ever-expanding vision he probably would have come to support our cause if he had lived. I am saying, however, that the Black civil rights movement which King led has stimulated all subsequent freedom struggles here in America. Moreover, King has been a personal inspiration for many.

Jeffrey Pulling is Registrar and a Trustee of Samaritan Theological Institute, Los Angeles. He is a graduate of Andover-Newton Theological School, Mass.

The struggle for liberation among Blacks, which started to move in the '50s, included a push for equal rights as citizens and for an end to discrimination in employment and society. The Black civil rights movement really bombarded our whole society. We were forced to pay attention to it. Other racial minority groups woke up and wanted their rights. Spanish-speaking people and American Indians have begun to demand what is their's by right. Different age groups have decided that they want to be heard, namely young people and elderly people. Sex has also been getting into the act. Women are turning our society's norms and patterns upside down. Gay men, Lesbians, and other erotic minorities are demanding full acceptance into economic, social, political, and religious arenas and an end to harassment.

We owe Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a huge debt for stimulating all of this. We are also indebted to him for many of the tactics and strategies we now use as we press for liberation. Following the pattern he set up, we are still trying to ensure the civil rights of all American people through passing laws and through the legal-judicial process. We still rely on non-violent demonstrations to make our point known, using rallies, marches, civil disobedience, fasts, etc. King did not invent these methods and strategies, to be sure, but he showed that they could be successful in the United States.

GOD HAS IMPLANTED A VISION IN OUR CHURCH OF AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY OF ALL TYPES OF PEOPLE...

We owe King another debt. More than any other contemporary figure, he linked the Christian faith with all of this. He reminded us that the work of the Church *is* the work of liberation, the drive toward justice and freedom. All of these struggles for liberation going on today are exactly what should be going on. This is what God wants to be happening. We should be joining in rather than standing to the side or worse, standing in the way. King reminded us of this, and I will always remember him for that. King called Christians back to the Biblical vision of deliverance, justice, and wholeness. One of King's favorite passages from Scripture was from the Book of the prophet Amos (5:21-24). Amos said that God despises the show and pretence of many religious feasts, assemblies, offerings and songs. What God wants to see is "a mighty flood of justice — a torrent of doing good" *(Jerusalem Bible)* or (as the *Revised Standard Version* puts it) "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos and several of the other Old Testament prophets spoke out repeatedly for an end to oppression and for recognizing the reign of God's justice *(Isaiah 1:16-17; Micha 6:6-8; Jeremiah 7:1-11; etc.)*. Trito-Isaiah said that the Lord does not want the people to

perform rituals and to fast while they keep on oppressing or neglecting their neighbors. The fast that God wants from them is for them to break the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, to smash every yoke, to share their bread with the hungry, to take the homeless poor into their own homes, to clothe the persons they see to be naked, and to not hide from their relatives who need help *(Isaiah 58)*.

Jesus himself, who was the very embodiment of God speaking and acting in our world, quoted another passage from Trito-Isaiah to describe his own ministry *(Isaiah 61:1-2 = Luke 4:16-19)*. Jesus saw his ministry to be this: to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to proclaim new sight for the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to announce that this was the time when God was ready to act and to give blessings. Jesus knew he would be killed if he carried out such a ministry, and so he was (just as King knew he would be cut down if he continued in his work). Jesus gathered around him a group of disciples and he trained them. He told them to go out and tell others about himself *and* to carry on his work. Jesus Christ tells us, his followers in this day, to do these same things.

King was a servant of God, and he called his fellow Blacks and all White persons of good will to likewise become servants of God. King saw the work of liberation as being the work of the Church. When there was a vacuum in the leadership of the emerging Black civil rights movement, he stepped forward. I look upon him as a saint, that is one set apart by God, one dedicated to God, and one used by God. I would like to suggest to all MCC churches that they celebrate King's birthday this January. Many of our churches have been doing this for a number of years. I suggest this not because it is a good White liberal thing to do or because it is a way to attract Blacks into our churches. Rather I suggest it for the sake of King himself and what he means to us. I think we all should set aside a time to thank God for the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. By his dedicated work and heroic example, King helped the rest of us to see what God wants happening in our world.

Remembering King on one day a year, however, is not enough. God has implanted a vision in our church and in each one of us individually. This vision is of an inclusive community of all types of people: Black, White, Gay, heterosexual, female, male, old, young, poor, wealthy, and everything in between. In the community of our vision, everyone would be in communion with God and with each other. Everyone would be giving of themselves *and* receiving what others had to give to them. This is the vision of the shalom-community which ancient Israel had and which the early Church had. This is the vision that inspires us today and keeps us working. Every time we build or accomplish anything that approximates this vision we show other people what God's will is, we are pointing ahead to the time when this vision will become a reality when God's reign is fully established and recognized.

There are several things standing in the way of our realizing this vision. There are several factors within our church and outside of our church that are hindering us and holding us back. I will not enumerate all the feelings and attitudes that block our vision, but I do want to stress that we have to start to get along with each other and to stop putting each other down. It is very unfortunate that we minorities often fight each other, and it is unproductive too. Every group, whether it be Blacks, Spanish-speaking people, Lesbians, feminists, Gay men, or whatever, has their own particular struggles to win and their own priorities. It seems to me, however, that racism, sexism, and homophobia are related.

MCC must press for the liberation of all people and groups, for their cause is our cause. We must be sure not to oppress other persons in our actions and inaction. I still see a lot of racism and sexism at work in MCC. We must be rid of them! It is no accident that only a few MCC churches have more than one or two Blacks in the congregation. It is no accident that in a majority of our churches still, women do not participate as fully as men. The inclusive community that we envision for ourselves will not come about by our dreaming about it and talking about it. We must be willing to commit our lives and our resources to do this work of God.

THE GAY CHRISTIAN
A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church

THE GAY CHRISTIAN is the theological journal of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Individual articles reflect the thoughts and opinions of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the doctrinal position or official policy of the UFMCC.

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Subscription and advertising address: P O Box 36277, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

THE CELLMATE

April/May 1976

Norm Flowers Joins National Prison Ministry Staff

Norm Flowers has resigned as Area Representative of the Board of Institutional Ministry in Chicago and has relocated in Los Angeles to assist at the national level of the prison Ministry of MCC.

Norm, who also coordinated the prison ministry effort in the Great Lakes District, received the call from the Board of Elders at their March meeting. He had been nominated by the Reverends Mickley, Bunce, and Gilbert who serve on the Board of Institutional Ministry. The recommendation was presented to the Elders by Rev. Elder Richard Vincent who is liaison Elder for this ministry. It was also necessary for Norm to make arrangements for his parole to be transferred to California and he has also requested a transfer of membership from Good Shepherd Parish/MCC Chicago to MCC of Los Angeles.

He will be filling a gap in the administrative work of the Board of Institutional Ministry, assisting on the 1976 edition of the *Prisoners Yellow Pages* and a new and revised edition of the *MCC Prison Ministry Handbook*, coordination of the pen pal program, and communication with Area Representatives.

In 1969 he graduated from Franklin Center High School, Franklin Grove, IL, with his major area of study in Agriculture and Business Administration. After high school, Norm worked on high line construction for nearly a year before entering the army as a draftee. In his basic training, Norm served as a Squad Leader and as Platoon Leader in Advanced Individual Training.

His experience and insights as a former inmate of the Illinois State Penitentiary system are valuable assets

Continued on next page

Pastor Heather Anderson Meets With Department of Corrections

The Rev. Heather Anderson, MCC Chaplain of Michigan State Prison at Jackson, met with Mr. Perry Johnson, State Director of Corrections, and the entire Board of Corrections on April 15, 1976.

The Rev. Nancy Wilson was with her. Nancy and Heather, copastors of MCC Detroit, obtained the appointment in order to request authorization to hold worship services at the Jackson institution.

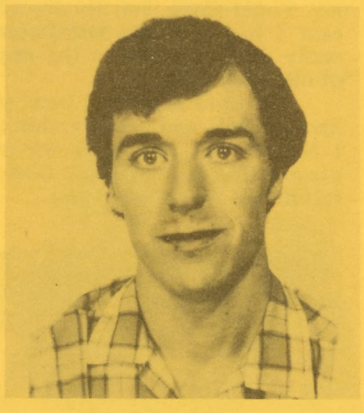
The request was not immediately granted. The Department politely heard Rev. Anderson and Rev. Wilson's presentation and explanation of MCC ministry.

"But we already have an interdenominational Protestant service," one official said.

"But homosexuals are openly condemned and made to feel unwelcome," answered Rev. Anderson. The MCC ministers went on to explain the uniqueness and centrality of the Holy Communion worship service in the Metropolitan Community Church.

The Director of Corrections indicated that the matter would be referred to the Attorney General of the State of Michigan and that there would be an answer by June.

Revs. Anderson and Wilson agreed that the attitude of the Department was not negative. They were informed that officials were impressed by their sincerity and credentials and by their work in the institution.



Norm Flowers

However, they learned that the real reasons for the delay and hesitation are two (not uncommon ones). 1) They feel they just don't know what it would mean to have 50 or 60 "homosexuals" in one place. [And it might be asked "what does that mean?"] 2) To recognize MCC ministry is somehow to acknowledge homosexuality and they don't know how to deal with this [politically complicated] factor. [And it seems no amount of explaining can change their misconceptions.]

Meanwhile Heather and sometimes Nancy, along with other volunteers, continue to visit the prisoners on a one to one basis once or twice a week. Brian McNaught, the national chairperson of Dignity's Social Action program, went with them before his recent move to Boston.

Chaplain Anderson has been informed by a reliable source that the warden of the Jackson prison is impressed by her work. Both Nancy and Heather have been recognized as Chaplains and admitted to the inner counseling rooms of the institution. But some of the prison staff are still singling out the leaders of the "congregation" for harassment and special punishments.

A Detroit attorney is now preparing the necessary legal papers to file suit if a favorable decision is not obtained from the Attorney General and the Department of Corrections in June.

The Director of Corrections is aware of the favorable decision by a three judge federal Court in California which stated that MCC is a bonafide Church and denial of prisoners' requests for MCC worship services is a serious infringement of their constitutional rights. The Department is aware that a similar suit will be filed in Michigan in this identical situation. ●

FLOWERS ===
Continued from previous page

to the national outreach of MCC Prison Ministry.

Carl G. Lee is the new Area Representative for Chicago and Rev. Heather Anderson has been appointed as District Representative of the Board of Institutional Ministry in the Great Lakes District.

"Norm has outlined some good projects for Prison Ministry", said Rev. Mickley, National Administrator, "but right now he says he is striving to make the present program operate at its full potential. We observed the effective work Norm was doing and we are confident that the national prison ministry will benefit from his enthusiasm, talent, and dedication to the Lord's work. We are pleased that he has come to Los Angeles to work closely with the Board. Many projects of the Board have been moving slowly. I'm sure we'll see progress now." ●

Christian Social Action: Prison Ministry

MCC has from the beginning been interested and involved in Prison Ministry. Since 1972 there has been a national prison ministry established by the General Conference.

"Prison Ministry is clearly a Christian social action mandated by Scripture," said the Rev. Bud Bunce, National Chief of Chaplains. He serves on the Board of Institutional Ministry along with Rev. Joseph Gilbert, National Advisor and Rev. Richard Mickley, National Administrator. Rev. Elder Richard Vincent is the Elder appointed as liaison with the Board of Elders.

Along with the National Council of Churches, "MCC will continue to be committed to working for change in the criminal justice system and to finding ways to join with others in common efforts in this critical area of our national life. We feel the membership of MCC in the Interreligious Task Force on Criminal Justice of the Joint Strategy and Action Committee (JSAC) is very important to our Christian social action mission and is complementary to our direct ministry of word and sacrament to the women and men in the state and federal prisons of America," said Rev. Mickley. ●

I AM THEIR CHAPLAIN

by Rev. Tere Ann Roderick

There is a small group of men sitting in the Protestant Chapel at 2:00 p.m. on a Monday afternoon. Of those few people, several are not even aware of the special outreach of MCC to gay people. They are not gay, and they really don't know why they are here, except that they wandered in once before and came face to face with a loving God.

The place is the Correctional Medical Facility, Vacaville, California, during the MCC service.

How do I know about their feelings? I am their MCC chaplain. Time and time again, I have heard strangers who wandered in state that this service meant more to them than any other they had attended. Time after time, I see the "straight" men return to sit among the gay brothers they once mocked. I don't try to understand it. This is between them and God, but I know it is *real.*

Yes, real. It is real, in that they are hearing acceptance from God, for that is what we try to preach. Real, in that they see the love the MCC group has, one for the other. Real, in that they are welcome, no matter who they are, no matter what they are, no matter where they have been. This is the Christ message unspoken, the one the men of Vacaville *show* rather than talk about.

We are few in number, and not the same faces each week. One week some people might get out of work to drop in, then the next service be unable to attend. It really doesn't matter. They are with us in spirit always.

It never ceases to amaze me that whether our regulars are with us or not, we still seem to have the same number in attendance.

Even more amazing to me, is the scope of the ministry we share at CMF. Last week, a brother I had never seen came to service. After the service, he came over to me to thank me, not for my words alone, but for the *Christmas* card I had sent him last December. It really made me realize the importance of our work here.

The Lord is moving here, yes, even here in CMF, and numbers don't matter. I believe that this work wll grow and prosper for the glory of God and the fulfillment of the scriptures. ●

S-1 MUST DIE!

NO COMPROMISE

In its present form S-1 cannot pass because of public opposition, but some Senators are still pushing for compromise that would keep 90% of it.

The massive rewrite of the U.S. Criminal Code by the Nixon - Mitchell Justice Department has repression of freedom hidden on every one of its 700 pages.

It must die. Compromise will not erase the total disregard for civil liberties displayed in this longest single piece of legislation which the Congress has ever faced.

The Board of Elders in its March meeting in Denver passed a resolution urging the districts and member churches of the Universal Fellowship to oppose this repressive bill. ●

Warden's Forum Endorses MCC

In a letter to Mr. Perry Johnson, Director of the Michigan Department of Corrections, the Chairperson of the Jackson Prison Warden's Forum has reported the findings of that group.

"The Forum members read and studied the UFMCC material made available to them. It is the general consensus that this religious group is honest and sincere. They are God fearing people who are concerned about providing Christian fellowship for both gays and non-gays. This group is interested in bridging the gap in all Christian areas, especially here in prison since it is vitally important for people in this place to find meaningful directives in their lives." ●

POETRY

the wisdom of God's plan

It's sometimes very difficult for us to understand
The wisdom and the love behind the things that God has planned

But we wouldn't have the rainbow if we didn't have the rain
We wouldn't know of pleasure if we'd never tasted pain

We wouldn't love the sunrise if we hadn't felt the night
And we wouldn't know of weakness if we hadn't sensed God's might

So God's given us a balance --
Enough joys to keep us glad
Enough tears to keep us humble
Enough good to balance bad

And if you'll trust in God
you'll see --
Though yesterday brought sorrow
The clouds will part and dawn will bring a better tomorrow

Mike Turpin
Arizona State Prison

RICHARD PAYNE FINISHING TIME AT LOMPOC PRISON

Richard Payne, a friend and correspondent of many in MCC has been transferred to the prison in Lompoc, CA, to serve the last four months of his time.

"I read about Samaratian Bible School in the January *In Unity*. Is there a chance I could attend? I sure hope things will be different this time. I have grown a lot. I think now I can face my problems instead of running from them. I send my love to all my friends in MCC."

"My release date is not until September 11, not August 1, as I was originally told. So, there goes General Conference for me. But there will be next year, won't there?"

"I am working in nursing here and learning quite a bit. I have to be in the closet here, but I would like to hear from my friends."

Richard Payne
36396 - 115
P.O.B. W
Lompoc, CA 93436

TERRY McLAIN THANKS HIS FRIENDS

I do want you to know I appreciate the many prayers that have been said for me. I am glad to report I have another chance to see the parole board soon. I don't know what I would have done with Jim Lewey's help. Thanks to him and what he said in my behalf to the parole board, I will have a new start. Thank you, MCC. I won't let you down if given the chance to come be with you.

Terry McLain
Menard, IL

■ It is great to be on the streets again. I am now attending MCC Los Angeles and working in Beverly Hills. I enjoyed being a part of MCC at Atascadero and appreciate the friendship of all my friends there.

Dan Jentzen
P.O. Box 1900
Santa Monica, Ca 90405

■ I have just transferred from California Medical Facility at Vacaville to California Men's Colony at San Luis Obispo.

At Vacaville it was my pleasure to share in the love of Jesus Christ under our very inspiring and devoted chaplain, Rev. Tere Ann Roderick.

At Vacaville I had the pleasure of directing the congregation in song. I remember well wonderful Willie Smith. Please give him my love in Christ, and also Revs. James Sandmire, June Norris, and Troy Perry, whom I have known since 1968.

In closing I want to express my gratitude to Rev. Roderick who is helping so many in the prison ministry. I pray the Lord will continue to bless her and the work she does.

Jack Lee Norman

Area Representatives

CARL LEE

Carl Lee is continuing the work begun by Norm Flowers in Chicago in behalf of prisoners and ex-prisoners.

Pen Pal classes, begun by Norm were continued by Carl and the group decided to continue meeting monthly to discuss problems and hear speakers that would help them with their ministry.

The Chicago prison ministry team is now working with more than fifty prisoners and ex-offenders. *

SHELDON HAIGHT

Sheldon Haight, Area Representative of the Board of Institutional Ministry in Seattle, WA, reports writing nearly fifty letters a month and making several visits to the Washington State Reformatory.

He writes that he was particularly pleased because "one of the guys I corresponded with recently made a trip to Seattle to personally thank me for writing to him while he was in prison. That was cool since many of the guys are never heard from again unless there are difficulties."

Sheldon reports, gleefully, that he himself has been dismissed from state probation and is now a free citizen.

He has run into some prejudice from the administration of McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary in Steilacoom, WA, where they "strongly disapprove of these faggot church services."

Sheldon, a deacon at MCC Seattle, is one of the longest-serving MCC members in the national prison ministry programs. In Seattle he and Rev. Warren Wagner collaborate on many projects in service to the many prisoners who have turned to them. *

BOB ARTHUR

The Rev. Bob Arthur, Pastor of MCC Omaha, and Area Representative in that area, continues his regular visits to prisoners, as well as counseling prisoners released.

Bob was saddened recently by the return to prison, for a violation of parole rules, of one of his counselees.

He still maintains a steady stream of letters back and forth from prisoners. His correspondence load is increasing because his correspondents are getting their friends to write him also. He preached on Prison Ministry at the Omaha Church recently and several church members volunteered to be pen pals. *

TERRY NAPIER

Terry Lee Napier, Area Representative in Cincinnati, has been visiting prisoners in the Labanon Correctional Institution near Cincinnati every Saturday and every other Tuesday.

Terry and John Good are also corresponding with about 20 prisoners in other institutions. ✱

STEVEN QUESNEL

Steven Quesnel of MCC Albuquerque, NM, has been corresponding with Mike Turpin in the Arizona State Prison. Mike is appearing before the parole board soon and asks prayers for patience.

Steven sent a collection of Mike's poems for consideration for future issues of Cellmate. ✱

NICK CUPO

Nick Cupo, Area Representative in Philadelphia, reports that three MCC Philadelphia people are working as volunteers with the Department of Probation. They are working on a one to one basis with probationers assigned to them regardless of their affectional orientation.

Two additional volunteers who are trained tutors in basic reading and writing skills are also giving their time and skills.

In addition two MCC people are working with Volunteers in Prison in various capacities, such as caseworker aides, tutors, counselors.

Two MCC members are trained Thresholds Counselors. Thresholds is a program that teaches decision-making to prisoners who are about to be released or paroled. Nick Cupo has been asked by state authorities to draw up a proposal to bring Thresholds into the state prisons.

Seven pen pals are writing prisoners on their mailing list.

Nick Cupo, a member of the Governor's Task Force on Criminal Justice, has been counseling a prisoner at the state prison who appears to be receiving unjust and unfair treatment. He has referred the matter to the Task Force which now is studying the matter.

PRISON MINISTRY TO WOMEN

By Dee Jackson, MCC New York

It took six months of visiting rehabilitation centers, dealing with ex-offenders, and meeting and briefing their Directors on what MCC is and our purpose in the community before a dream finally became a reality.

The constant refusals from the administrative staff were disappointing for three of those months. When I made my first visit behind the walls of Rikers Island Facility for Women, I was only allowed to see Bobbi Sanchez, and only because she is a member of MCC. I was invited to lunch with the staff there and was given a chance to discuss our program with the superintendent. I was asked to participate on a panel the inmates had prepared on homosexuality.

As a result of this meeting, women began to express their desire to be counselled. Letters arrived at our office every week asking for me to visit.

Some women were able to discuss their sexuality openly, and we always ended in prayer. They were deeply moved and demanded more time and religious services. This behavior became so threatening and overwhelming for the staff that I was limited to visiting only Bobbi.

There are many gay professionals working in the system who have helped us gain access to the facility. There are other avenues opening up. It's been hard work, but my greatest support has been the many prayers for this ministry.

MCC NEW YORK GOES INTO THE JAILS

Jail ministry is the theme of the highly impressive March issue of the MCC New York *Mustard Seed*.

Rev. Jay Neely tells about his ministry to the men at Rikers Island, the detention center of the New York City Department of Corrections.

Dee Jackson tells of her ministry and the administrative stumbling blocks to her ministry to the women's division at Rikers Island.

Bobbi Sanchez tells it like it is from inside Rikers Island.

Bill Smith skillfully summarizes the national prison ministry of the Universal Fellowship.

All in all, an impressive testimony of what one congregation is doing "for the least of these." ●

PRISON MINISTRY TO MEN

By Rev. Jay Neely, MCC New York

It was over two years ago at District Conference in Providence that the congregations of the Northeast District made a commitment to do programs for prison outreach to the men and women of the gay community. A year ago, MCC/NY began plans for a prison outreach. Those plans became a reality on the second Sunday of November, 1975, when the first Fellowship service was conducted in the Day Room of the "Queen's Tank" at Rikers Island.

Rikers Island is a detention center for the New York City Department of Corrections. Like most penal institutions, it is crowded, understaffed and strife-ridden. There are three main detention areas: for men, women, and adolescents. In the men's facility, the "homo" is segregated for the purpose of protective custody; this is not necessary in the women's facility. If being in prison is dehumanizing, being in prison and gay is the lowest rung on the ladder. The male gay inmate is the object of ridicule, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

There are many in the Department of Corrections who can discern the special problem of the gay inmate; some are so deeply imbedded with prejudices that they probably can never be changed. For most, there is an intense need for education. Our mission to Rikers Island has not only enabled us to bring the message of love and salvation to our incarcerated gay brothers and sisters, to share and to give as we are commanded by Christ; it has also enabled us to carry out a low profile educational process. For our "gay Christians" are the "queerest" bunch!

Our work has just begun. It is a big project. It is a great need. The volunteer response has been unlike any other project we have undertaken. The commitment of all involved is deeply spiritual. We conduct services in the main chapel now. As we gather there, the atmosphere is just like any MCC. We join hands with out new gay friends at the conclusion of the service and sing with real conviction "blessed be the tie that binds."

Fellowship In Unity

News of the Worldwide Fellowship Family

Pastor Austin Amerine Serves MCC Portland, Oregon

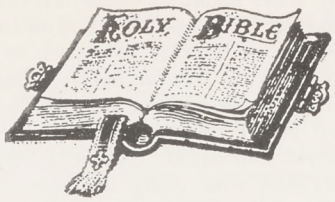
After a feasibility study conducted in the final quarter of 1975 by Rev. A. Austin Amerine of San Francisco, a Portland, Oregon group was officially granted Study Group status. As of January 1, 1976, the group affiliated as Metropolitan Community Church of Portland.

Pastor Amerine has completed his move from San Francisco and is actively engaged in building a Christian Community in Portland with the aid and assistance of many members of the congregation and an interim Board of Directors.

Austin is assisted in his ministerial duties by Denis Moore, a dedicated man who has conducted Christian Fellowship meetings for members of the community for the past two years. The congregation is deeply indebted to Denis for his spiritual guidance in the absence of an organized church. Also assisting Austin is Guy Wilson, who recently moved to the Portland area from Chicago, where he was active with Good Shepherd Metropolitan Community Church. With this excellent staff, MCC-Portland will build on a solid base.

From a group of 12 to 15 individuals in 1975, the group currently has 30 to 35 worshipers in regular attendance. Plans call for an expansion from one Sunday service to two as well as a mid-week rap session.

The mailing address of the church is Postal Box 8348, Portland, OR 97213. Reverend Amerine may be reached at (503) 2925219. Services are currently held on Sundays at 1:00 p.m. at Centenary Wilbur Church, SE 9th St. and Ash, in Portland.



Bicentennial Year Blessings at MCC Tampa, Florida

IN UNITY learns from Volume 4, number 4 of the MCC Tampa Crusader that God is moving in that congregation. Pastor John Hose writes, "So many wonderful things are happening so rapidly that I hardly know where to begin! First, I would feel remiss if I did not say something about the great spiritual 'lift' we all received from that grand campaigner for the Lord, Rev. Paul Van Hecke. Everyone was renewed by his great spirit. We thank him, and join in saying to him: 'Hurry back.'

We hasten to take this opportunity to welcome to our staff, and into our family, Exhorter Bob Darst, who comes to us from Salt Lake City. We are confident that Bob will make a great addition to our ministerial family. He needs to find secular employment. If you have any leads, by all means call the Church Office -- this will be our best way to help Bob.

As we prepare for the *Lenten Season*, we will be involved in several directions: *The Ingathering on Ash Wednesday* for the work of John 3:16 Missions, our weekly Thursday night Living Room Groups throughout the Congregation for contemplation, prayer, and the development of our sense of togetherness with Christ.

Last -- and by no means least, we have begun the planning for the culmination of a dream since the inception of this Congregation. During this -- our 5th Anniversary Year -- we hope to acquire 30 beautiful, comfortable pews to grace our House of God, and hopefully to renovate the chapel in preparation for our 5th Birthday, during the first week in August when Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry will join us in celebration!"

MCC Houston, Texas Publishes First Issue of *The Key*

The Rev. Robert Falls, Pastor, wrote the following introductory message in the first issue of MCC Houston's new publication, The Key:

"This first issue of *The Key* is another major step in the growth and outreaches of the MCC of the Resurrection, for which we give our Heavanly Parent the thanks, praise and glory!

It is appropriate that our congregation has chosen "*The Key*" as our publication's name. In Matthew 16:19, our Lord said, "I WILL GIVE YOU THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, AND WHATSOEVER YOU BIND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN, AND WHATSOEVER YOU LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN."

Our gay sisters and brothers, now for the first time in the history of humanity, have the *Key* to proclaim our right to the kingdom of heaven through the love of Almighty God, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

With this opportunity comes the beautiful, yet heavy, responsibility of telling the world that God created us all and he loves what he creates, that God does not discriminate and that because of our Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we are all truly 'one in the spirit, one in the Lord, and we'll be known as Christians by our love!' "

Oregon MCC Group -- A Presence in the Community

by Gail E. Zadakis

Gail is the spouse of the Rev. Ann Montague, Worship Coordinator of the new work of the Lord in the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

MCC of the Willamette Valley has found a new home for Sunday Worship. This growing Study Group had been meeting in a room belonging to a Socio-Medical Clinic but, Praise God, coziness stretched into uncomfortable crowdedness so the congregation voted to search for a new home. Complete with organ, we will be meeting every Sunday at 1:00 in the chapel of the Covenant Presbyterian Church.

When the feasibility study for an MCC in Eugene (OR) began, we were confronted by a minister who was "not trying to discourage" us "but, there are no lesbians here; the homosexuals in this area are all agnostic; there's no gay bar." We thanked God for presenting this man of knowledge to us because he spelled out so clearly just how much an MCC was needed! No lesbians in Eugene – how quaint!!

As for there being no gay bar (chuckle) it's one of the best gay bars we've ever been in. Women and men together, loving, sharing and caring for one another.

The agnostics? They're around I'm sure, but then so are our Christian brothers and sisters who have crowded our Sunday services enough to warrant moving to a larger place!

MCC has been openly welcomed by the gay community and we've been working closely with both the Gay People's Alliance and the Emerald Court (Rev. Montague is the Court's Chaplain).

A few months ago, Rev. Perry joined the gay community during its Gay Pride Week and though the attendance wasn't spectacular, he was greeted with warmth and admiration by all who came to listen to him speak.

Rev. Gary Wilson has visited us and the pot-luck dinner went over extremely well. The mother of the Court's Empress hosted this dinner for us. Gary shared the Good News with us on Sunday and the congregation is slowly but surely beginning to realize the extent of the UFMCC throughout the world.

Several weeks ago, MCC was asked to participate in a forum at one of the larger churches in Eugene to share our views on MCC and the gay community. After a brief talk to the group of approximately 65 people, we divided into rap groups with one MCC member to about 10 other people. The Spirit of God was truly with all of us as EVERYONE was receptive, warm and seeking for answers to dispel all the stereotyped ideas which they might have held. How we long for the day when more people will get together and ask questions rather than "assume" they know about the gay community, or anyone for that matter.

In contrast, last Sunday a handfull of MCC members leafletted one of the Baptist churches a week after the Pastor gave a 45 minute, two-part sermon on *Return to Sodom.* Besides condemning the gay community as a whole, he went on about the "nefarious Troy Perry," gave out-dated "facts" about the UFMCC and made the remark, "Now 'they' are *trying* to start a church here!" to which George, a dear friend, replied, "Brother, we ARE here!"

The Lord has truly been blessing us in our work and with God on our side, we can only continue to grow. By growing in Love, there is nothing which can hinder us for where there is Love, there is God and where there is God, there is Power and Strength!

The Shepherd's Staff of MCC Chicago, Illinois Publishes Scholarly Study

The monthly *Shephers's Staff* of Good Shepherd Parish, MCC Chicago has again proven its originality, depth, and superior quality in the publishing of David Pierce's scholarly article, "UFMCC Around the World" in issue Number 2 of their 6 year old publication.

In Part I, Pierce carefully and with theological acumen faces the topic "Religion and Sexuality."

Part II, "UFMCC Yesterday and Today," provides a thumbnail history from 1968 to the present.

"UFMCC Outreach Today and Tomorrow," as the third part traces the growth of the Fellowship from Los Angeles to Toronto, London, Zaria, and concludes, "Outreach overseas took a major step forward with the appointment of Lee J. Carlton to head world missions."

It can only be hoped that this is only the first taste of much to come from the pen of David Pierce. *rrm*

Toledo, Ohio MCC Invited to Membership in Church Council

MCC Toledo, though only a Study Group with a fellowship of thirty men and women, has been invited to join the Toledo Area Council of Churches.

In a letter to Ms. Jan Howard, Worship Coordinator of the western Ohio congregation, the Executive Director, Leonard Kleppin writes, "I am writing to invite the Metropolitan Community Church to become a member Congregation of the Toledo Area Council of Churches... which exists to 1) give witness to the unity of the churches in the Gospel and 2) be a vehicle through which member churches can do those missional tasks which they decide to undertake together."

The letter indicated MCC Toledo would be received at the end-of-April meeting if the MCC group submits an application.

Ms. Howard told IN UNITY, "I feel we have been received very well in this area since we came into existence in October 1975. We have a working and loving relationship with the people of the North Toledo Area Corporation, which is a social planning and development group. They are fantastic people and have helped us around many problems that we may have stumbled into headlong. We thank God for them. With their help, too, we have become friends with some of the clergy and other people of the area around the church."

Ms. Howard did not conceal her excitement about the invitation. "It came as a complete surprise," she remarked.

She indicated that the long time Toledo organization, PRO (Personal Rights Organization), has been very helpful in refering people and introducing her to friendly people.

Jan has spoken at meetings of the Bowling Green State University Gay Union and as a result some of the members of that group are traveling the forty some mile round trip to the MCC worship services and rap sessions.

Ms. Howard is enthusiastic about what God is doing. "We see good things in store for Toledo. We pray that if these things are what God wants, they will happen. We pray that everyone could have the positive things happen that we have had."

Southeast District Conference Scheduled for June 4-6

All MCC members and friends are invited to attend the District Spiritual Renewal of the Southeast District on June 4, 5, 6 in Avon Park, FL.

Of course, only elected delegates can vote, but all are welcome to attend the spiritual renewal and the business meetings of the District Conference.

The cost of the conference is $24.00, which includes lodging, meals, and registration. The Tampa area churches will host the get-together.

Booklet Available— *The CHIRHO Concept*

A booklet, *The Chirho Concept*, written by The Rev. Joan Johnson, Chairperson of the Commission on Innovative Ministries, has been financed and published by the Los Angeles Chirho group.

Chirho is a self-help organizational concept for handicapped people.

Booklets can be obtained from The Rev. Joan Johnson, 1050 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, CA 90015. Donations will be accepted to finance printing additional booklets.

Elder John Gill Installed as Pastor of MCC Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

The Rev. Elder John W. Gill was installed recently as pastor of the Church of the Holy Spirit, MCC Ft. Lauderdale. The same weekend the Florida congregation celebrated its fourth anniversary as a chartered church.

Rev. Elder John Hose, pastor of MCC Tampa, officiated at the Sunday morning installation service.

Rev. Keith Davis, District Coordinator and pastor of MCC Miami, assisted in the impressive ceremony.

A banquet Saturday evening touched off the anniversary celebration.

Plan Now for GENERAL CONFERENCE in Washington, D. C.

The Seventh Annual General Conference of the UFMCC will be held in Washington, DC, starting August 10th and ending August 15th. Tuesday and Wednesday will consist of meetings for boards, commissions and committees, as well as workshops and various conference activities. Business sessions will convene on Thursday. The majority of workshops and the business meeting will be held at the First Congregational United Church of Christ, the host-church of MCC Washington, DC.

A limited amount of housing accommodations has been contracted at the Ambassador Hotel, 14th and "K" Streets, NW, in downtown Washington, within walking distance of the conference site at First Congregational Church. "In the bicentennial year, when prices are high, we have acquired special discount room rates. The hotel has free swimming pool privileges for hotel guests," said Michelle Rickard, coordinator of conference preparations.

Hotel room reservation application forms are available from your local MCC or UFMCC, POB 36277, Los Angeles, CA 90036. All reservations should be mailed directly to: Hotel Reservations, MCC Washington, DC, 945 "G" Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001. Please do not send any reservations, paid or unpaid, to the hotel. All reservations will be handled through the above Washington address. A 50% deposit is required with each reservation. Make check or money order payable to the "Ambassador Hotel" (please, not MCC). Reservation refunds will be honored if the reservation is cancelled 14 days before your scheduled arrival. Because of the limited accomodations, only paid reservations will be processed on a first come, first served, basis.

May has been declared "General Conference Preparation Month" by the board of directors of MCC Washington, DC. They will sponsor special events calling attention to the up-coming conference and recruiting volunteers to assist. Special parties, dinners, presentations and a carnival will highlight the preparation month.

Meanwhile, co-coordinator Adam DeBaugh is deep into preparations for Affirmation '76. All gay organizations, worldwide, are invited to join a huge rally in Lafayette Park, opposite the White House, between 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm on Sunday, August 15th, to affirm the civil rights of gay people in this bicentennial year.

New Publication— *Introducing MCC*

Rev. Tom Stone writes that he used the last four issues of IN UNITY, Rev. Perry's autobiography, and *Christian Sexuality* on a recent speaking engagement.

"They were all helpful. I was received very well. But I really wish I had a special packet for this kind of re-education."

Introducing MCC scheduled for an early summer printing is being written now. Contributors are still being sought: photos, testimonies, significant stories in the growth and development of MCC in its witness to the world of today.

Washington Office Publishes Third Issue of *Gays On The Hill*

The Universal Fellowship Office in Washington, DC, has published the third issue of *Gays On The Hill*. The impressive six-page newsletter reporting news of the struggle for gay civil rights in the U.S. Capital, is edited by Adam DeBaugh. The Rev. Roy Birchard is Director of the office. The headlines are:

REP. OTTINGER INDRODUCES HIS OWN GAY RIGHTS BILL

ARE YOU COMING TO DC FOR AFFIRMATION '76?

CONGRESSIONAL FILES ESTABLISHED

SENATE BILL BEING DRAFTED

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES QUERIED ON GAY RIGHTS

NORTHEAST DISTRICT GIVES GRANT TO WASHINGTON OFFICE

Subscriptions are free, but *Gays On The Hill* "is able to continue thanks to the generosity of its readers and supporters. Tax deductible contributions are welcome and will help us continue our work. We welcome more names for our GOTH mailing list."

The address of the Washington office is: 110 Maryland Ave NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Pastor Jay Deacon of MCC Hartford, Connecticut Named to Serve on Human Rights Committee

The Rev. F. Jay Deacon, pastor of MCC Hartford, has been named to the Administrative Committee of a prestigious Connecticut Social Service Agency.

The Social Service Department of the Capitol Region Council of Churches (CRCC) provides programs and full time staff to relate to problems in the areas of: equal rights, housing discrimination, addiction, poverty, aging, education, and other community concerns.

MCC has been a CRCC member since April 1974. Recently the Council passed a resolution expressing a Statement on Basic Human Rights. MCC members collaborated in drafting the resolution which is summarized as follows:

"We are bound to all people of the world by our common humanity as children of God. We recognize that the quality of life for all suffers when any of our fellow citizens are denied their God-given and constitutionally protected rights... Therefore we will examine laws that focus on the needs of persons suffering discrimination because of race, color, creed, age, physical handicap, language or affectional preference."

Recently Roman Catholic congregations have begun to join the CRCC following regulations laid down by their Archbishop, John Whealon.

Because of the violent opposition of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Connecticut to the proposed "Gay Civil Rights Bill" in that state, it was feared there would be Roman Catholic opposition to the CRCC advocacy of gay rights. The state bill was defeated March 3, 1976, by a vote of 84-62. A Statement by the Catholic Bishop had called homosexuality a disorder and (therefore) landlords might not be compelled to rent or sell to them.

When the CRCC resolution was debated at the Council's Annual Assembly a delegate moved to delete "affectional preference" from the human rights statement.

Rev. Deacon responded: "For too long the church has assumed the prerogative to ration the civil rights of people according to a theological bias of its own. *Difference* has been equated with *heresy*, and people of different affectional orientation have been burned as heretics. I hope we are past discussing whether persons who are different should possess equal rights in Connecticut. That would be a throwback to the time when citizenship was based upon church membership and theological heresy was equated with political sedition. The issue is civil liberties, and we must not leave this Assembly thinking we have advocated human rights if we exclude gay people from this statement."

When the vote was taken, only three of more than 200 attending delegates voted to delete "affectional preference."

MCC Hartford has received extensive media coverage from this and another skirmish with Roman Catholic officials. Last Fall MCC had been invited to have a display booth at the Hartford Urban Environment Fair. It turned out the fair was held on the grounds of the Roman Catholic Cathedral.

A diocesan official threatened to close the whole fair if MCC (and the Planned Parenthood organization) did not remove their booths. Both MCC and the Capital Region Council of Churches removed their booths. But since that date, Roman Catholic officials have refused to discuss the matter with Rev. Deacon.

Rev. Deacon, newly appointed member of the CRCC Administrative Committee, is also editor of *The Gay Christian.*

Washington Office Sets Up Files-- Needs Your Assistance

The Fellowship Washington office has set up files for every member of Congress.

Rev. Birchard and Adam DeBaugh are seeking information that will help in completing the file.

1) Information of the congressperson's stand on gay rights.

2) Copies of letters to and from congresspersons.

3) A list of active gay organizations in the congressional district.

4) A list of gay religious organizations in the congressional district.

5) Pro gay legislation in the city, county, and state.

6) Gay newspapers, etc.

7) Businesses relating to gay community.

Washington Office Offers Lobbying Help

The Washington office of the Fellowship published in its March *Gays On The Hill* an offer to help people who will be in Washington, DC, in making appointments with their Congresspersons.

"Our office can help you make appointments with your Congresspersons for Wednesday, August 11 (Lobbying Day) or any other day you would like. Just send us the information, and we will set up an appointment for you. We need to know the name of the Congressperson or Senator and your name, address, and phone number as well as the date and possible times for an appointment, and where you expect to be staying in Washington... We will periodically check to confirm your appointment until August..."

Rev. Roy Birchard, Director of the office, has urged as many as possible who are going to be in Washington for Affirmation '76 to make appointments with their U.S. Congressperson and Senators.

Northeast District Gives Grant to Washington Office

The Northeast District of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches made a special grant of $130 in support of the Fellowship's Washington office at the district conference in February.

The conference voted unanimously to make the grant from a surplus in the district budget. Many district ministers and lay people expressed an interest in the work of the Washington office. Adam DeBaugh, Assistant Director, reported on the work of the office to the ministers and laity assembled in Philadelphia for the conference. He told of the efforts to get gay people to indicate to Members of Congress their support for the gay civil rights bill. Copies of *Gays On The Hill* were made available to conference participants.

DeBaugh explained that the Fellowship is only able to contribute $100 a month to the office and that Rev. Birchard and he do not get paid for their work.

Other contributions of any size are welcome in order to increase the outreach of the Fellowship in the U.S. capitol. Contributions are tax deductible and checks can be made out to the Washington Office, UFMCC.

Rev. Hill, Tom, Ken, Ms. Bouchard

Tom Cole and Ken Martin Observe Vows

Good Shepherd Parish Metropolitan Community Church, Chicago, witnessed the Holy Union of two of its favorite sons on February 19, 1976.

Tom Cole and Ken Martin exchanged their vows with each other at an 8 PM ceremony in the presence of 175 friends from MCC, Dignity and Integrity in the venerable Wellington Avenue Church of Christ, where MCC makes its home.

Tom and Ken met at MCC last year. Ken is pastor of Good Shepherd Parish MCC and the couple live in a hospitable apartment near the church.

Rev. James Hill, pastor of MCC Indianapolis, who was formerly on the ministerial staff of Good Shepherd Parish with Rev. Ken Martin, officiated at the Holy Union. He was assisted by Ms. Valarie Bouchard, GSP/MCC Exhorter and McCormack Seminary student.

Following the Holy Union and a reception in the church social hall, Tom and Ken left for a 15-day Mexican holiday.

On their return, Ken, speaking for the both of them, expressed their gratitude in the following message published in the *Shepherd's Staff* (March 1976).

"I have seldom, if ever, used this space to share an essentially personal message. However, as many of you know, on February 19, Tom and I stood before our friends and God and pledged our love and commitment to each other in a service of Holy Union. Because we met at GSP/MCC over a year ago, we want to thank you for creating a community of love and support where people can meet and know each other as human beings.

"During this past year, Tom and I both have felt an incredible love and support from you. We agree that in the deepest and most profound sense, you are our family; it is with you that we have and will continue to share our joys and sorrows. We believe that God has blessed us beyond measure by allowing us to work in a congregation of committed people who give so consistently and unselfishly of themselves. In making our commitments to each other, we have each rededicated ourselves to the work of our Lord as we see it being done in our church and throughout our Fellowship. It is our prayer that we may be worthy of the most beautiful of the gifts that God has given us: you, our friends."

Southwest District to Observe Second Annual Spiritual Retreat

The second annual retreat of the Southwest District Conference will be held May 28030, 1976. The announcement was made in March by the Rev. Donald Pederson, District Coordinator and Phil Grad, District Secretary.

Cottontail Ranch, located in the beautiful, secluded, and smog-free

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Continued next page - Column 1

FELLOWSHIP - Continued

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Mr. Al Smith (San Diego)
Rev. Robert Wolfe (Toronto)
Rev. Lee J. Carlton (Sydney)
Rev. Tom Bigelow (London)
Elder Hose
Elder Sandmire
Elder Vincent
Elder Cureton
Elder Smith
Elder Gill
(plus one lay person from each of Australia, Canada and England)

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Rev. Roy Birchard (Washington, DC)
Mr. Ray Russell (St. Louis)
Liaison Elder . . . . . Elder Cureton

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Ms. Lucia Chappell (Los Angeles)
Mr. Steve Jordan (Los Angeles)
Rev. Jose Mojica (New York)
Mr. Bill Thom (Oxnard, CA)
Ms. Joyce Tree (Atlanta)
Rev. Gary L. Wilson (Oakland)

Committee on Human Awareness

Co-Chairperson . . Rev. Ann Montague (Eugene)
Co-Chairperson . . . . Mr.Ray Russell (St. Louis)

Task Force on Women

Chairperson . . Rev. Ann Montague (Eugene)
Members . Ms Julie Alexander (Los Angeles)

Continued next page - Column 2

Malibu Canyon, will provide the setting and facilities for this weekend of prayer, praise, fellowship, and inspirational sermons in a camp meeting atmosphere.

The Rev. Robert Cunningham, pastor of MCC Long Beach, will serve as host along with members of the Long Beach congregation.

Registration forms are available from each pastor or worship coordinator in the District and should be sent to Rev. Cunningham before May 22nd.

Sleeping accommodations in heated winterized cabins are limited to the first 200 registrants. Located six miles from the Pacific Ocean between the Ventura Freeway and Pacific Coast Highway, Cottontail Ranch is easily accessible just off Las Virgines Road.

Rev. Troy D. Perry will preach the opening retreat sermon on Friday evening. This year's retreat theme is "ON A NEW HIGH WITH..."

Cottontail will open its gates to MCC at 5:00 p.m. Friday May 28 and dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m. Saturday will be devoted to spiritual growth groups, recreation, and meditation. Rev. Perry will deliver his second inspirational message on the retreat theme at the Saturday evening service.

The 11:00 a.m. Sunday service will bring the weekend spiritual retreat to a conclusion.

Atlanta Mayor Proclaims MCC Day

Atlanta Mayor, Maynard Jackson, proclaimed January 18 Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta Day in honor of the Church's 4th Anniversary.

The proclamation cited MCC Atlanta's efforts in the community to reach out to all people.

The Rev. Elder John Gill, outgoing pastor of MCC Atlanta, now pastor of MCC Ft. Lauderdale, was made an honorary citizen of Atlanta.

Rev. Elder Troy Perry received a similar honor from Mayor Jackson the previous year.

Please turn to page 49

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UTTERLY FANTASTIC ... is the first thought in reading the March issue. The color, the photos, the articles, and the news are so very professional and rewarding to read and absorb.

You are all to be congratulated for your sacrifices of time and talent.

When appearing on radio and television, we often receive inquiries from the listeners. Along with a personal letter and schedule of services and events of the church, we also include one or more copies of IN UNITY. And the response is just great!

IN UNITY lets people know we are not just a little church in the woods (... or in the woldwood), but a dynamic, growing and fulfilling witness of the power and love of our Lord God and Christ Jesus.

You cover so many subjects and areas in this issue that it can't help but be one of the most effective "tools" the Fellowship has in communicating to our people and the community at large who we are and what we are about.

The Rev. Keith Davis, Pastor, MCC Miami and Southwest District Coordinator●

Thank you for your attentive letter.

Regarding magazines to be sent to MCC Auckland, send them by sea mail as air mail is out of the question. (That takes 4 to 6 weeks.—Ed.)

As MCC is now expanding here in Auckland and we have a hard core of people who want and need promotional material, please forward 50 copies each month instead of the 25 previously requested.

D. McMillan, Treasurer, MCC Auckland, New Zealand●

May I be allowed space in the columns of your world-wide Fellowship magazine IN UNITY to thank member congregations of the Universal Fellowship who have been sending greetings, gifts, church magazines, invitations, and letters of all sorts.

May God continue to bless them in their love to the people of this part of the world, Nigeria. There is no other way of expressing our gratitude for their love to us except through this media, as we are unable to write or to reply to all our letters due to the cost of posting.

The members and friends of MCC Zaria are very grateful to you for seeing that we get this Fellowship magazine every month.

I have to thank you for the January 1976 IN UNITY, for letting us know what is happening at the Samaritan Bible School. I commend the January issue as very educative. Congratulations.

The Rev. Sylvanus Maduka, Pastor, MCC Zaria, Nigeria●

IN UNITY is an enviable success. I am extremely proud of you and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. You have provided us with a news magazine which we can all be proud of. Congratulations.

I would enjoy receiving the magazine on a continual basis and wondered if you would change my address there. In May, I will be moving to Boston, where I can be reached at the Dignity National office:
755 Boyleston St, Boston, MA 02216.

Thank you for sharing with me.

Brian McNaught, Boston, MA●

Thank you for the wonderful coverage of the chartering of MCC Akron in the impressive March issue. I am personally pleased to have been named in the story and feel it a great honor.

Gary, Board Clerk, MCC Akron●

My very dear friend, Brian McNaught, has just given me a copy of your magazine. I particularly liked *The Gay Christian*. The articles were professional and interesting.

I am quite excited about your magazine. We in DIGNITY have much to learn from your journals. I would like to subscribe. Please accept my check for $10.00.

Is there any way I can get reprints of "Androgynous Sexuality" and "Cultural Reflections on James Cone's Black Theology from a Gay Perspective?"

Campus Minister, Wright State Campus Ministry, Fairborn, OH

Just wanted you to know how *great* the March issue of IN UNITY/ *Gay Christian* is. We received our copies last night at MCC services in New York.

I was doubly excited. As a charter board member of MCC New York, I was involved with every issue of *The Gay Christian* when it was published by our congregation. It's good to know it is still alive and well, and I know it will be a worthwhile instrument for MCC in evangelism throughout the world.

Incidentally, because of the articles on Nigeria and the forthcoming work in South Africa, I am sending Elder James Sandmire a check for $100. Just wanted you to know those articles are important in reminding us of our duty to overseas missions.

My thanks once again to you personally for a very good job of editing a periodical that we can all be proud of.

Dubose McLane, MCC New York●

The response from your story in IN UNITY about Gay Methodists was truly overwhelming. I got one letter from England from a gay minister who had been "stuck off" by the British Methodists because he was openly gay. I am enclosing a check for a subscription to IN UNITY for him.

FELLOWSHIP - Continued

Ms. Valerie Bouchard (Chicago)
Ms. Terri Dean (Miami)
Ms. Dee Jackson (New York)
Ms. Rhea Miller (Denver)
Ms. Mary Morris (Sacramento)
(plus one from each of Australia, Canada and England)

Task Force on Men
Chairperson . . . Mr. Ray Russell (St. Louis)
Members . . Rev. Austin Amerine (Portland)
Rev. F. Jay Deacon (Hartford)
Mr. Arthur Fleschner (Tampa)
Mr. Jim Jaynes (Grand Prairie, TX)
Mr. Frank Murr (Denver)
Rev. Robert A. Sirico (Los Angeles)
Rev. Jay Thomas (Cincinnati)
(plus one from each of Australia, Canada and England)

COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Chairperson . .Rev. David R. Carden (Jacksonville)
Members . . . . . .Rev. Bill Dearth (Seattle)
Rev. Charles Larsen (San Francisco)
Mr. Fred Radick (San Diego)
Rev. Jeffrey Pulling (Los Angeles)
Ms. Valerie Bouchard (Chicago)
Rev. Jim Hill (Indianapolis)
Ms. Karen Lindstrom (St. Louis)
Rev. Robert Arthur (Omaha)
Rev. Evan St. Ives (Tampa)
Rev. Min Snow (Atlanta)
Rev. Heather Anderson (Detroit)
(plus one each from Australia, Canada, England)
Liaison Elder . . . . . Elder Gill

COMMISSION ON INNOVATIVE MINISTRIES

Chairperson . Rev. Joan G. Johnson (Los Angeles)
Members . . . . . Mr. Galen Moon (St. Louis)
Mr. Arthur MacDonald (Cleveland)
Ms. Judy Weber (St. Louis)
Liaison Elder . . . . . Elder Cureton

Task Force on Aging
Chairperson . . . . . Mr. Galen Moon (St. Louis)
Members . . . . .Rev. Walter D. Collins (Tampa)
(woman to be assigned by Elders)

Task Force on Handicapped
Chairperson . . . . . Mr. Arthur MacDonald (Cleveland)
Members . Mr. Michael S. Nordstrom (Tucson)
Mr. George McDermott (Indianapolis)

Task Force on Alcoholism
Chairperson . . . . . Ms. Judy Weber (St. Louis)
Members . . . . . .Rev. John B. Rowe (Seattle)
Mr. Walter Applebaum (Denver)

MINISTERIAL CREDENTIALS AND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Policy — The Board of Elders will strive to carry at least two members of the committee over to the following year for continuity.

Continued next page - Column 1

FELLOWSHIP - Continued

Chairperson . . . . . .Rev. Robert Cunningham (Long Beach)
Members . . . . . Rev. Robert M. Falls (Houston)
Rev. William D. Chapman (San Jose)
Rev. Nancy L. Wilson (Detroit)
Rev. Robert S. Wolfe (Toronto)

BY-LAWS COMMITTEE

Chairperson . . . . Mr. Herm Mank (San Francisco)
Members . . . . . Rev. Howard R. Wells (Atlanta)
Chairperson, Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order
Rev. Kenneth T. Martin (Chicago)
Chairperson, Commission on Government, Structures and Systems
Liaison Elder . . . . . Elder Hose

GENERAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

Duty — This committee is in session only at General Conference. Duty is to receive all resolutions proposed for the floor of the conference for review and editing for uniformity, continuity, and applicability.

(to be assigned by Elders)
Liaison Elder . . . . . Elder Hose

PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Director. . . . . Rev. Richard Mickley
Liaison Elder . . . . . Elder Perry
IN UNITY Advisory Committee
Editor . .Rev. Richard R. Mickley (Los Angeles)
Associate Editor .....Rev. Laurence Bernier
Members . . . . . Mr. Bob Barber (Chicago)
Mr. George Bright (St. Louis)
Ms. Lucia Chappell (Los Angeles)
Rev. Frank W. Scott (Pittsburg)
Rev. Tom Taylor (Sacramento)
GAY CHRISTIAN Advisory Committee
Editor. . . . . Rev. F. Jay Deacon (Hartford)
Members . Rev. Joseph H. Gilbert (Providence)
Rev. Keith D. Davis (Miami)
Rev. Charlie Arehart (Denver)

By the way, you gave us amateur geographers a rough time with that map on page 7 (March 1976). I thought I knew the US and I was puzzled, especially by that excrescence that looked like the southeast appendage of Missouri (pointing northwest). And surely enough, I turned the magazine upside down and it WAS. Voila!!!

Fred Methered, Honolulu, HI●

Let me commend you and your staff for the excellent IN UNITY which you have presented the past six months. It *is* professional. Its contents are noteworthy. The printing and layout are commendable. Keep up the good work. I want only that the world see us as we truly are — professional persons dedicating our lives to the salvation of souls, not social misfits playing church.

The Rev. Elder John Hose, Tampa MCC●

Please find enclosed our cheque for the latest issue of IN UNITY.

I would like to take this opportunity of offering my congratulations on the excellent format of the magazine. The articles, and the layout are of a high standard.

Gerry Smith, Worship Coordinator, MCC Brisbane, Australia

MCC Portland would like to extend our congratulations for the quality of the March issue. As Rev. Amerine told our congregation, "You may not agree with everything presented in the articles, but they will make you think." We send our best wishes for continued success.

The members of our congregation would enjoy correspondence with any interested persons.

Michael Hoffman, Secretary, MCC Portland, Oregon●

Just a note to offer you my congratulations on a fine March issue of IN UNITY and *The Gay Christian*. The combining of the two publications seems to be off to a good start and I know that the "marriage" will prove to be even better with time.

I've given Jay Deacon my thoughts and criticisms regarding the new format of TGC so I won't bore you with them, but I do want to suggest that in succeeding issues that TGC not be split up into two sections as it is in the March issue.

Thanks, and again — congratulations on the fine work you are doing!

The Rev. Howard Wells, Pastor, MCC Brooklyn, New York

I continue to be amazed and pleased with the improvement of our publication, IN UNITY. Again I must say thanks and congratulations for a job surperbly done. The March issue is beautiful.

We received our regular shipment and sold out the first time they were made available at the coffee hour after church. There were people who were asked to wait for their copy until we could get another shipment. Because of this I am requesting that you ship to us as soon as possible an additional fifty (50) copies of this issue.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. May God continue to bless you in your many endeavors in His service.

Bill Smith, Exhorter, MCC New York●

With great interest I have read IN UNITY and feel it is a great source of general information and a spiritual uplift.

I would like to see in the future more on how lives have been changed by the spiritual food they receive from MCC. It is good to see both the social and the spiritual changes, but I feel at the present time the social is being placed in the front.

From what I have seen there can be very little social change we can bring about until there is a real change of heart and the Lord Jesus Christ is given first place in our lives. It may be good to look at what is most important. Otherwise MCC could go like many other groups, just a social group, and not one that meets together to lift up Jesus Christ and build up one another in the faith. We can only change lives of others as Christ changes us into His perfect image.

Keep up the good work. It may be good to keep before the public the basic truths MCC holds. This, then, can change many people if they know MCC teaches that one must be "born again" and have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lee Noklely, Granite Falls, Washington●

Continued from page 46

Pastor Kieth Davis Active in Radio Ministry

The Rev. Keith Davis, pastor of Christ Church MCC, Miami, appears frequently on local AM and FM talk shows in the Miami area. The church is seriously considering its own weekly radio program in the Fall.

The pastor has participated in several panels at Florida International University and other colleges in the Miami and Dade County area. "This is very productive and has increased attendance by students," it is reported in the Southeast District Newsletter.

MCC Miami is collaborating in the attempt to obtain a $70,000 government grant to establish a self-help house for the Miami community.

MCC Miami issues a pictured membership card for all its members on a yearly basis.

The congregation sponsors a monthly "trash and treasure" sale to raise funds for travel to District Conferences.

Southeast District Publishes Newsletter

The District Coordinator and officers of the Southeast District published a six-page, March 1976, newsletter to cover news and events in that District. It is addressed to "Fellowship Members and Friends."

Rev. Keith D. Davis, pastor of MCC Miami is District Coordinator; Rev. A. Evan St. Ives, Assistant District Coordinator; H. Ernest Richardson is Secretary-Treasurer.

The newsletter reports on the installation of Elder John Gill as pastor of Ft. Lauderdale, the excellent growth of MCC Jacksonville, and other district news.

Great Lakes District Conference To Be Held in Detroit, May 21-23

MCC Detroit is hosting the Spring District Conference of the Great Lakes District, May 21-23.

Upwards of 200 MCC members and friends from Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois are expected to attend.

The Rev. B. J. McDaniels, who resides in Akron, OH, is District Coordinator. Co-hostesses will be co-pastors of MCC Detroit, Rev. Nancy Wilson and Rev. Heather Anderson.

Rev. Elder Vincent officiates at Installation

New Co-Pastors of MCC Detroit, Michigan
Nancy Wilson and Heather Anderson

Nancy Wilson and Heather Anderson Installed in Detroit

What a festive occasion! The Reverend Nancy L. Wilson and the Reverend Heather E. Anderson were installed as co-pastors of MCC Detroit on Sunday evening, February 1, 1976. Members and friends gathered to share the joy of the moment. The representative of the congregation asked them if they would accept the call to their pulpit. When they responded in the affirmative, they were handed the keys of the church and they were presented their charge by the Reverend Elder Vincent. Those assembled broke into joyous applause when the new co-pasters were presented to them. A special cake with punch was served at the reception after the close of the worship service. Congratulations to MCC Detroit and co-pastors Heather and Nancy. We are proud of you!

NORTHWEST DISTRICT PUBLISHES DRESSED UP DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

The April 1976 first edition of *Neighbors*, **the quarterly publication of the Northwest District, is a classy seven-page professional typset, graphically appealing "journal" of news and inspiration, edited with skill and acumen by Jackie Harris of San Jose. (Cf. March IN UNITY, page 9.)**

Some of the news articles are reprinted here as they appeared in *Neighbors*.

district coordinator's corner...

A special thank you to all of you who made it possible for me to have a fantastic experience. And everyone who has put any money in the offering is the "you" I'm thanking. You made it possible for me, as your District Coordinator, to go on a month-long tour of our churches north of the California-Oregon border.

We have two new works in Oregon—our only works in Oregon. Rev. Ann Montague is heading a Study Group in Eugene and Rev. Austin Amerine is heading a Study Group in Portland. Ann started out in the Seattle church a few years ago, has attended Samaritan Bible School, and was working in New York MCC before returning to our District.

Austin is one of those people who started "way back when" in Los Angeles, then was instrumental in starting San Francisco, where he has served in an infinite number of capacities. It is good to have family in Oregon, and believe me, those people up there are family.

Portland, by the way, has a bicentennial billboard that reads, "200 years of freedom? Not for 20,000,000 gay Americans."

My next stop was Seattle. That used to be our most northern church and they were really cut off when there was nothing happening in Oregon. But they built strong and the glory of God's children rejoicing is obvious in Seattle. One member of the church has a bus ministry—he conducts prayer services and Bible studies in the back of city buses as he commutes.

The women there are very interested in getting the Women's Committee of their church going again.

From Seattle I went on to Anchorage, now our northernmost church. They are so far away, and yet so much a part of us. They love to hear what is happening in other churches, and they really look forward to coming down to the "lower 48" for District Conference in May.

They are having real problems over the property they bought last year; the city has denied them a building permit.

Anchorage was the only place where the sun was bright and shining. Even Hawaii, my next stop, was rainy.

Hawaii is not in our District, but Rev. Don Pederson, their coordinator, and I have a deal. There is a triangle fare from Los Angeles or San Francisco to Anchorage and Honolulu. So to provide extra visits and support for these two remote churches, we use the triangle fare.

Rev. Paul Peachey, the MCC Hawaii pastor, and I are old friends from the San Francisco MCC, so we had some good visits. I held Ash Wednesday service there, and feel we were all really blessed. The church is growing rapidly and has a good outreach to our brothers and sisters stationed at Pearl Harbor.

So you see, I have so much to thank all of you for. Accept my thanks and accept the love that all the churches sent to all the other churches. Isn't it wonderful that we can all love each other, even when we don't know each other by name? ●

SPRING DISTRICT CONFERENCE

STOCKTON On the weekend of May 21, Stockton will be hosting the Northwest District Conference in the Stockton First Christian Church. Contrary to the talked about and publicized retreat, the decision at conference in Sacramento was to hold a business meeting and workshops.

The following are some of the workshops in the planning: Faith, Fellowship, and Order; publications; women; board of directors; lay involvement; deacons and exhorters.

Very central to unifying people from many locations will be our three worship services. Don't hesitate to let Stockton know if you wish to take part. ●

STANFORD'S CONGRATULATIONS

SAN JOSE It finally took Roberts' Rules of Order (revised standard version) to save the local Council of Churches from the chaos of the Holy Bible. The issue: homosexuality.

On February 10, pastors and delegates from 86 member churches of the Santa Clara County Council of Churches stood mute in prayer, asking for divine wisdom on MCC, "the gay church." A dramatic vote of reconsideration was about to occur, on the question of an earlier council action admitting MCC to membership. The action had touched off two months of heated debate and soul-searching within the council. In protest, two churches had already resigned, and more threatened to, if the earlier action were not rescinded. It was quite a moment for Christians. Homosexuals at the altar of Christ? But what would Paul and Moses think? And, more importantly, what about Jesus? Was the Bible in truth "a victim of its time?" Questions were legion, answers obscure, decision unavoidable.

In the end, it was a clear-cut victory, if not for God, then at least for MCC: 63-22. Santa Clara County churches (the second such council to so act within the state) thus showed how far the humanist revolution has come among the ranks of the godly.

We of Stanford GPU wish the San Jose Metropolitan Community Church well in the contributions it will surely make to the council and to the community. This church forced out a traditionally fearful question for many Christians, and yet the answer came back so heartening. Our congratulations and best wishes to MCC of San Jose.

reprinted from Stanford's GPU *News* ●

WELCOME, PORTLAND!

PORTLAND After a feasibility study conducted in the final quarter of 1975 by Rev. Austin Amerine of San Francisco, a Portland, Oregon group was officially granted Study Group status. As of January 1, 1976 the group affiliated as Metropolitan Community Church of Portland.

Pastor Amerine has completed his move from San Francisco and is actively engaged in building an established organization in Portland with the aid and assistance of many members of the congregation and an interim Board of Directors.

Austin is assisted in his ministerial duties by Denis Moore, a dedicated man who has conducted Christian Fellowship meetings for members of the community for the past two years. The congregation is deeply indebted to Denis for his spiritual guidance in the absence of an organized church. Also assisting Austin is Guy Wilson who recently moved to the Portland area from Chicago where he was active with Good Shepherd Metropolitan Community Church. With this excellent staff, MCC-Portland will build on a solid base.

From a group of 12 to 15 individuals in 1975, the group currently has 30 to 35 worshipers in regular attendance. Plans call for an expansion from one Sunday service to two as well as a mid-week rap session.

The mailing address of the church is Postal Box 8348, Portland, OR 97213. Rev. Amerine may be reached at (area code 503) 292-5219. Services currently are held on Sundays at 1:00 p.m. at Centenary Wilbur Church, SE 9th and Ash in Portland. ●

Rev. Howard Wells Elected as Pastor of MCC Atlanta

The Rev. Howard Wells, currently pastor of MCC Brooklyn, founder of three MCC's, soon to be a Master of Divinity Graduate from Union Theological Seminary in New York, Chairperson of the Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission, former editor of The Gay Christian, was elected at an April 4 congregational meeting as pastor of MCC Atlanta, succeeding the Rev. Elder John Gill, now pastor of MCC Ft. Lauderdale.

Rev. Wells is the founding pastor of MCC San Francisco, MCC New York, and MCC Brooklyn.

Deaf Interpretation at MCC Chicago

MR. ARTHUR MacDONALD, Chairperson of the Fellowship Task Force on the handicapped (INNOVATIVE MINISTRIES), signs all church events for the deaf and teaches weekly classes in sign language to 22 members of Good Shepherd Parish MCC in Chicago, IL

Christ our passover, has been sacrificed, alleluia:
therefore let us keep festival with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

1 Cor. 5, 7. 8

"He is Risen"

GOOD NEWS AT GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH

by David Pierce

Recent months at Good Shepherd Parish Metropolitan Community Church in Chicago have been a time of spiritual growth for the congregation and of increased involvement of church leaders and members in the life of the community. God has been good in bringing to us many fine individuals who have added their talents to work already in progress.

The pastoral staff, under the able direction of the Rev. Kenneth T. Martin, has been active in leadership of the church. Ken, in addition to normal pastoral duties, has spent considerable time in training those who are likely to become ministers in UFMCC. Our exhorters, Valerie Bouchard and Ted Hall, have taken on great responsibilities in preaching and sacramental duties. Many seminarians in the Chicago area have been attending worship services at Good Shepherd Parish and have been generous in giving their time to ministerial programs.

Claudia Hendricks, a student at Bethany Theological Seminary, has established a campus ministry at the University of Illinois Chicago Circle. In addition to working with gay groups on the campus, she has brought many students to the worship services. Her involvement has also included work with the Evangelism Committee.

We have been blessed by the presence of Arthur MacDonald at our church in the last several months. Art, who has been active in the Fellowship for many years, is sharing with us his talents in specialized ministries for the handicapped. A beginning has been made with services signed for the deaf. Art has also been training members of the congregation in this valuable talent, and this will enable us to provide an ongoing ministry and outreach to deaf persons. The church has, through Art's efforts, acquired equipment for helping blind and partially sighted; the Braille typewriter and Brailler machine will enable us to assist this group of handicapped persons.

Another area in which Good Shepherd Parish has become involved is in an active prison ministry. Norm Flowers served for several months as Area Representative for Prison Ministry while he was living in Chicago. Norm has since joined the Fellowship office to coordinate Fellowship efforts to help prisoners. His work in Chicago has been taken up by Carl Lee. Carl directs the program of correspondence with prisoners and serves as a volunteer with Chicago agencies which help discharged prisoners.

The ministry of music at Good Shepherd Parish has been the special responsibility of Ron Froemming who has served as choir director for six months. The choir has not only been a source of spiritual inspiration to the congregation at our own worship services but has traveled to other cities to help with the music program in other MCC churches. The choir performed at a recent District Conference and also sang at Champaign where a new group is organizing to join MCC. Choir members are having benefit events in an effort to earn money so that the choir can go to the General Conference this summer.

During the first year of Ken Martin's pastorate much effort was made to give media exposure to the work of the church and to the services available at Good Shepherd Parish for those in need. In 1976 the pastoral staff has been concentrating on the local situation both in serving the needs of the membership and in being of service to the community. One feature of this is a twenty-four hour answering service. Another is the upgrading of the monthly newsletter which is distributed throughout the community as well as being mailed elsewhere.

The Publications Committee of Good Shepherd Parish has responsibility for *The Shepherd's Staff*, the monthly newsletter. The committee decided last year that issues should focus on particular topics. The first issues of 1976 "Gay Parents" and "Parents of Gays" included many articles which have been helpful to those dealing with homosexuality in their families. The March issue "UFMCC Around the World" was

an attempt to report on the current situation of the Fellowship, and the April issue "The Rising Christ" deals with Christian views on death and resurrection.

Several members of the church are parents of young children, and the pastoral staff felt that it would be desirable to begin a Sunday School program for them. Joannie Niccolai has coordinated this endeavor in Christian education. The children attend the worship service through the sermon hymn and then leave with a teacher for Bible lessons and activities. For all members and others the pastoral staff leads weekly sessions of Bible study and prayer groups on Wednesday evening.

A special feature of community involvement has been Rick Noll's membership as Good Shepherd Parish's representative to the Coalition, a working group of gay organizations in the Chicago area. The Coalition has been active in dealing with problems of interest to the entire gay community. Particular attention is given to civil rights and politico-legal matters. Rick's work on the Coalition and his position there as Secretary are a recognition by the gay organizations in Chicago of the good work that Good Shepherd Parish has been doing.

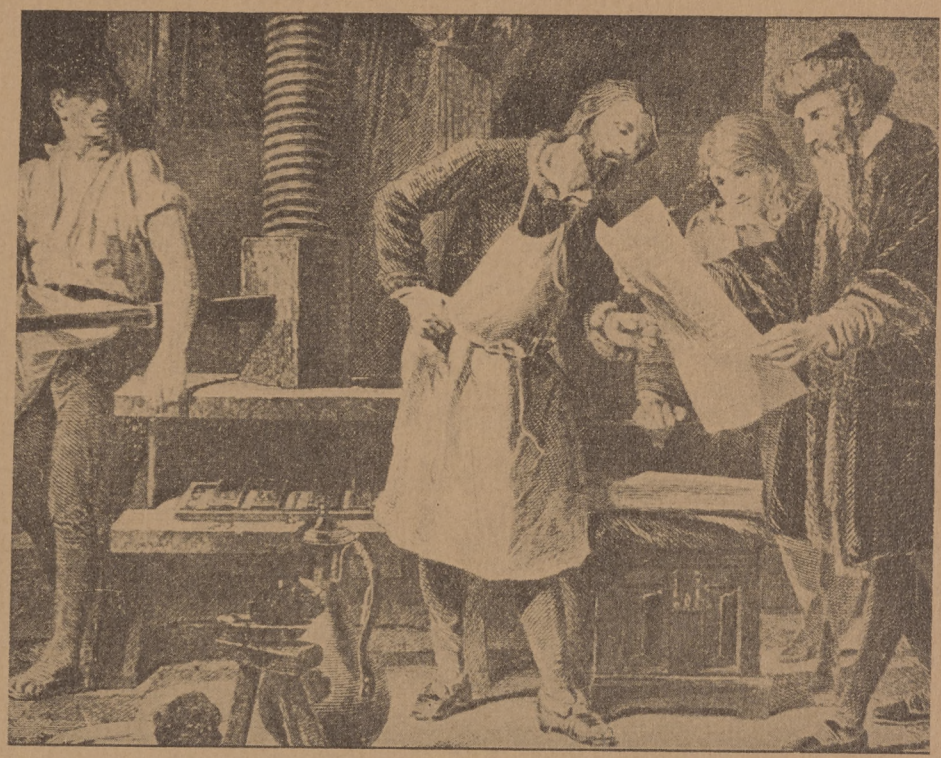
While this account of various activities and special ministries and outreaches at Good Shepherd Parish illustrates many recent successes in the good work here, much remains to be done. In June the Rev. Elder Troy Perry and the Rev. Elder James Sandmire will lead a program of spiritual renewal here. This promises to be a meaningful experience for the membership and is likely also to increase community awareness of the services which the church provides.

Many of the church members are also active in community organizations which have not been a formal part of the program at Good Shepherd Parish. Some of the women participate in various feminist groups. The pastoral staff has been available to area schools and organizations for lecturing and workshop discussions. Some members of the church have been helpful in working with Maturity, a new organization in Chicago for gays over 40.

Coming months will, with God's help, witness the continuance of the useful ministries established. It is likely too that the members of Good Shepherd Parish will be called upon by the community we serve. The needs are there, and the church stands ready to meet them. ●

Gay Christians in the Church Press

by Rev. Roy Birchard



"Gay people and the church -- the advances, the setbacks, the healthy tension and exchange of views -- are big news these days. The Religion News Writers Association, a group of reporters for daily newspapers, ranked the gay issue number five when they picked 1975's top ten church news stories," according to a feature article by Howard Erickson in The Gay Lutheran *April 1976.*

The following article by the Rev. Roy Birchard examines a sampling of the coverage of gay Christians in the church press in recent months.

Gay people are in the news these days, from the cover of *Time* magazine to the pages of *Christianity Today*. Often they are gay Christians whose witness in MCC and other churches has stirred public interest. The topic, once unmentioned among Christians, now stirs debate in church councils from local church committees, to state councils of churches faced with applications for membership by MCC congregations, to the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches debating gay civil rights.

In May this year, for instance, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church hotly debated whether or not to accept the Presbyterian Gay Caucus as an official Presbyterian organization. Observers the next month at the United Church of Christ's General Synod in Minneapolis described the gay issue as the "most exciting, meaningful" debate heard.

Where there is debate and interest, there is also news coverage, analysis and religious opinion — not only in *The New York Times* and other secular papers, but in the publications of the churches themselves. How are we presented to other Christian readers?

For several years now, the United Methodist' "*Newscope*" and "*New World Outlook*" have presented continuing and fair coverage of gay Christians; the latter publication presented a long and very favorable feature article about the charter service of MCC Boston in early 1973. Articles have also appeared in the United Methodist/United Church of Christ monthly "*Engage/Social Action*," and one can be sure of more coverage as the 1976 United Methodist General Conference in Portland, Oregon, approaches.

On the Roman Catholic front, in recent years, *Commonwealth* editorialized on our behalf, and *Catholic World* and the *U.S. Catholic* carried feature articles on gays and the Catholic Church.

Of course, gay Chrisitans have been the object of viewings-with-alarm by the *Texas Methodist Reporter*, the *Presbyterian Layman*, and, almost regularly, in *Christianity Today*. And, we should not forget the Jehovah's Witnesses who inadvertantly started our Nigerian congregation by featuring an attack on UFMCC in an African edition of their publication. A great many church publications have maintained a wall of stoney silence. Less well known, however, is that *The Christian Century*, long considered a bastion of the Chicago school of liberal Protestant theology, has done backflips over the gay issue. In March 3, 1971, the *Century* carried a lead editorial, "*To Accept Homosexuals*" with a long, feature coverage on the progress of MCC and other gay Christian endeavors. Subsequently, however, under the conservative editorial leadership of "liberal" James Wall, news of gay Christians vanished from the *Century's* pages. A silence of several years ensued, broken only by a review of the Enroth/Jamieson, *The Gay Church*.

Last March, I was part of a delegation from the National Task Force on Gay People in the Church which met in Chicago with editor Wall to question his editorial priorities. We butted heads for over an hour, to no apparent avail. Wall held firm to his position that it was "the job of causes to prove themselves" and the *Century*, under his leadership, was "not a cause publication." He complained that he could get no "good, objective" articles on gays and religion. Recently, however, as major Protestant denominations have had to grapple with the issue, news of the gay questions has crept into news columns, but still no major article comparable to Elliott Wright's 1971 overview of gays and religion. In September this year, for instance, news of the Integrity, Dignity and MCC conferences was run under a head "Gay Church Meetings" in the "Events and People" section, though personally, I suspect it was the appearance of a major theologian whom Wall does recognize, Norman Pittenger, at two of the meetings that made it "news."

Wall himself was the author of a lead article entitled, "Methodist Face the Homosexual Issue" in the March 12 Century. Chiding the "young leaders" of the Methodist Council on Youth Ministries who asked for ordination of gays, Wall concluded, "Whether homosexuality is normal, aberrant or sinful is a debatable point. But church leaders can't wait on the debate; they will have to act soon on requests to ordain self-acknowledged homosexuals. Judicatories are political bodies, and the majority of church members probably still regard homosexuality as either 'inadequate' or 'sinful.' So it is probably safe to assume that this particular challenge to United Methodism's official policy on ordination will end in rejection for those who want to have both an openly homosexual life style and a career in the ordained ministry."

Though a signed lead piece by the *Century's* editor, Wall avoided any consideration of what was ethical, or "right," confining his analysis to the gloom of "realist" church-political observation. In the following issue, Wall's lead article, entitled, "The Unreal World of NCC Meeting," described his impressions of the session of the National Council of Churches' Governing Board that endorsed gay civil rights. Meditating on his encounter the night before with a Chicago member of a veterans' organization opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment, Wall watched the Governing Board session, noting:

"One of the few times emotion is displayed is during a polite debate on a resolution favoring civil rights for homosexuals. Even then, on a topic still unmentioned in many churches -- and viewed with alarm in most others -- only a few delegates dare suggest that perhaps this is not the best time to announce to the public that the NCC is again out on an avante-garde limb. What gives such a meeting its air of unreality is the distance between the discussions here and the lives of the church members in their jobs, homes and churches.

In the Politics of the NCC and its member denominations, this civil rights resolution solved nothing, but it was a victory for the young and aggressive gay liberation lobby that has fought since 1973 for its place on the NCC agenda and finally achieved the first step toward what it hopes will be a final victory of complete acceptance of homosexuality as a viable life style freely received and lived. The politeness of the delegates debating the issue of civil rights for homosexuals was painful to watch. Obviously this is not a subject that lends itself easily to public support or attack, for it touches upon self-awareness and the complex matter of human sexuality. The homosexual issue has become something of a litmus test for machismo or lack thereof. The floor of an NCC Governing Board plenary session is not the best place to examine what has normally been faced in the privacy of a counseling room . . . Like too many of its member bodies, the National Council of Churches has been too quick to respond to cause groups and not sophisticated enough in relating to Middle America."

As in the case of Methodist ordination, the complaint obviously is not about the rightness or wrongness of gay sexuality --which Wall would prefer to see remain safely locked "in the privacy of a counseling room" -- but that insufficient attention is being paid to a codeword invented for the Nixon White House.

Monday Morning is a newsy and scrappy little magazine designed mainly for Presbyterian ministers to vent their opinions in. In its August issue this year, it carried an article entitled, "A Pseudonym is Necessary" by "Jane Lake," a lesbian minister who said of the United Presbyterian General Assembly:

"May 17, 1975, was a painful day for me and for many others who sat in the Convention Center at Cincinnati, for our church had chosen to say that somehow we were less acceptable than others who call themselves Christians. There is no way for me to relate to you how devastating it is to have the very church, which taught and challenged me to see my ministry as loving, reconciling, and liberating all person, by its actions deny to me and to at least 10 percent of our church membership the reality of that love, reconciliation, and liberation . . . I truly believe that the UPCUSA might look to the gay community as a real model of the message of love, which it, the church, has attempted to express. . ."

In the September 8 issue, two retired ministers offered responses to Ms. Lake. Said Cary N. Weisiger, III, of Madison, Conn., "Jane, you don't need a Gay Caucus to make you feel at home in the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.," while the Rev. William S. Hockman of Waverly, Ohio, gave "Advice to Jane Lake: Your brothers and sisters in the church will and can love you, if you will be more loveable. Stop whining. Get really gay in spirit. Again, we will love you for the human being you are, but we draw back from approving the subculture you gay people want us to endorse."

In the next issue, the Rev. Robert G. Stier of New Providence, N.J., wrote "A' Dear Jane' Letter" pointing out that "Jesus speaking through Paul in Romans 1:26,27 states that homosex-

uality and lesbianism are sin. We have to agree with Jesus about that." (One wonders if, like proponents of the view that Francis Bacon actually wrote Shakespeare's plays, this minister is arguing that Jesus really wrote Paul's letters?) "I agree that some 'gay' persons are already 'faithful leaders' of the UPCUSA," Stier continued. "I would hope that practicing homosexuals and lesbians (who do not understand their actions to be sin) would not be in positions of leadership in the church, just as I would not want a practicing thief to be a church treasurer, nor a practicing adulterer to be pastor or elder . . ."

Betty Dollar Wallace, "pastor's wife, Grand Lake, Colo.", broke her previous, long-held silence ("feeling that [heretofore] I would be meddling into the preachers' business"). Mrs. Wallace exclaimed that, "It appalls and disgusts me to know that an ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ labels herself a lesbian. And further, insists on remaining both minister and lesbian. It is also apparent that Ms. Lake is using the church deceptively since she refuses to identify herself . . . Psychiatrists tell us that sometimes a protest is really a sick person's cry for help. . . "

More letters (including some positive ones) were to appear in the following issues.

A.D. magazine, joint publication of the United Church of Christ and the United Presbyterian Church, offers a generally much more enlightened presentation of gay Christians. Several times a year, news of gays in the church appears. Earlier in 1975, before the UCC General Synod which was to consider the question of gay civil rights, A.D. carried a long piece entitled, "Gay Christians: Their Church, Our Church," presenting the experiences of members of the UCC Gay Caucus and this writer's exodus to MCC. And subsequent to the General Synod's positive action, coverage in word and photo was what gay readers might hope to receive.

Perhaps more importantly as a pattern that other church publications might seek to imitate, *A.D.* goes beyond simple reportage of debate and church conflict to present gay people as integrated members of the Christian community. Last December, for instance, its regular "Interpreters of Our Faith" series featured the poet W.H. Auden with excerpts from his Christmas oratorio, "For the Time Being." In its page of biographical description of Auden, it casually and naturally revealed that this significant 20th century Christian was "a practicing homosexual."

In its May 1975 issue, a special "A.D. Report" on "The Family Today" featured articles on "What Does the Bible Say About the Family?", "Will the Future Change the Family?" and an article by Charles Willie, professor of education and urban studies at Harvard on "Is the Family Here to Stay?" Interspersed with these major articles were brief, one-column statements by nine families and family members, including a black, inner-city family, a missionary family, a teenager from Orangeburg, N.Y., who described life in a divorced/remarried suburban pattern, a widower and his daughter, a woman in New York living with a man to whom she is not married – and Fred Bradford, member of the board of MCC New York, and his lover, pictured with cat. Fred's statement is reproduced here:

My family now does not consist of a man and a woman who may or may not have children. I grew up in that kind of family with a mother, father, one sister, and two brothers.

I am not married, nor do I live with a woman; I do not have children. But I am part of a family. I live with another man whom I love very much. We are not joined in a civil marriage, as there are no laws permitting it. We belong to a church that permits holy unions for gay people. But we have decided for the time being not to be joined in holy union.

What makes us a family? We live together with our pet cat in a small apartment in Manhattan. Since our incomes are not similar, we share expenses on a prorated basis. I work with computers, my lover works with people. He likes cooking and indoor gardening; I like to take apart and rewire telephones, lamps, radios, and so forth. So our interests are complementary. Though we don't agree on everything, we have not had any major disputes. We enjoy living together and consider ourselves a family.

In the September issue, the *A.D.* family feature received mixed reviews. One pastor wrote, "I thought the most recent issue dealing with questions regarding the nature of the family is one

"Family"

Fred Bradford *grew up in a St. Paul, Minnesota, suburb as a member of the United Church of Christ. He is now a member of the Metropolitan Community Church in New York City and a programmer analyst for Control Data Corporation.*

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SPECIAL

In March CBS presented a special hour long "Documentary on Walt Whitman," noted American poet. The program dealt honestly and directly with Whitman's homosexuality.

Recently a biographical sketch of Walt Whitman was dramatized on television under the title "Song of Myself," taken from his book of poems, "Leaves of Grass."

Whitman's homosexuality, while not emphasized in the production, was acknowledged in various ways, especially in its touching portrayal of his projected love and tenderness shown the frightened, wounded and dying solders on the battlefields of the Civil War; as well as his intimate relationship after the war with a young man who shared his life and his home for a period of ten years. The bitter denunciations heaped upon him by his father, the derision in which he was held by a brother, and the sorrow experienced by his mother could not induce him to renounce his particular persuasion and lifestyle.

For those unacquainted with "Leaves of Grass," but with a desires to familiarize themselves with its contents, it might be in order to suggest that the approach be made with patience, for Whitman's style is far removed from other American poets. It has been mentioned that it paralleled, to a degree, poetry found in parts of the Old Testament. One critic declared that "the rythym of his lines suggest the rise and fall of the sea he loved so much."

Possibly the poem "Song of Myself" is among his most outstanding achievements, and is a worthwhile challenge to anyone not familiar with Whitman and his avowed homosexuality during the days when such an admission was unique. His willingness to publicly declare his love for those of his own sex, even though he was but a lone voice crying in the wilderness of misunderstanding, contempt and derision, is a shining example of courage to mankind today. ●

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of the best you have ever done. I like the interplay of major articles with vignettes regarding diverse experiences of family life..." But a woman in McKinney, Texas, said, "I am personally ashamed that this magazine is being sent to my son in college and take particular offense..." While a resident of Pampa, Texas, suggested that "Rather than name your magazine, *A.D.* 1975, I would suggest that you call it *Trash* and put it in the garbage can..." Mrs. Walter S. Grebner of La Jolla, California, wrote, "Just as our wounds were healing, *A.D.* drops another bombshell in its manner of presentation of 'The Family Today.' One gains the impression that your dignifying of Fred Bradford's and Carol Gertzman's (the unmarried woman) family patterns gives tacit approval of this lifestyle as one of the many choices for the Christian family. This affronts me."

The conflict between truth and journalistic fealty to the sponsoring agency was raised by Thomas W. Kirkman of Royal Oak, Michigan, who wrote, "*A.D.* obviously does not understand the nature of its mission. A denominational publication should have as its object that of selling the beliefs, goals, ideals, and standards of its sponsor... I am accusing *A.D.* of presenting alternatives alien to the faith in its article on the family. We out in the trenches need to have friends beating our drum. We have too many other drummers already without subsidizing one."

The sessions (boards of directors) of the Clallam Bay, Wishington, and Central Shadyside Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa., went officially on record, protesting. Shadyside's session said, "We deplore the publication... indicating that a gay liaison is an acceptable family. This has not place in a Christian magazine. If this is necessary for cooperation with the United Church of Christ, perhaps it is time to sever this relationship... This action is being reported to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and our presbytery executive."

Still, the precedent of presenting gay Christians in a Christian publication, along with all the other kinds of Christians, has been set. Churches and magazines actually thrive on conflict and debate. MCC has dealt with conflict itself and doubtless will again. Sometimes within our own church family we forget that we have friends and allies in other churches; sometimes in the comfort of our Christian family, we forget that in other churches, gay people still cringe in silence while people who know little about them debate their lives with authority, if not enlightenment. Christian education is a struggle and a process, whether it be teaching nine-year-olds what the Book of Jeremiah is about or teaching retired ministers that an open door evangelism is not going to work if people are then thrown back out the door for being themselves. In the five years since I first began watching the church press for news of gay Christians, there has been an explosion from silence to hot debate. This is a good sign. Christian homosexuals have nothing to fear from the truth, for ultimately the truth *will* set us free. ●

notes

● †† The Washington State Patrol will rehire a radio technician who was fired because he is gay, following a court decision, but will not hire homosexuals as troopers because homosexuality "would affect their job performance."

● †† The Wisconsin Legislature is considering a bill to legalize gay marriage, lower the age of consent to 14, and repeal laws against consensual adult sex.

● †† San Francisco has become the first place to hire an openly gay deputy sheriff. Rudi Cox obtained the position with help of San Francisco Sheriff, Richard Hongisto.

● †† The Gay Raiders of Philadelphia, headed by Mark Segal, recently released results of a survey of police departments in key U.S. cities. The survey shows an increasing acceptance of gay women and men among the nation's law enforcement agencies. Berkeley, CA Police Chief Wesley Pomeroy is quoted in a typical response. "We make no inquiries about an applicant's sexual preferences, and we would not deny employment to someone because he or she is gay... It's clearly within the spirit of constitutional guarantees not to discriminate against gays."

● †† By a vote of 60 - 32 the Iowa House of Representatives recently refused to make homosexual acts between consenting adults a crime. In the heated Bible-quoting debate, the usual epithets resounded throughout the chambers, "Will they be teaching homosexuality in the schools." "Let the one without sin cast the first stone."

● †† The Dignity national officers boycotted the Advocate Invitational Conference in Chicago on moral grounds over the exclusion of certain gay leaders from the conference. Brian McNaught traveled to Chicago to confer with Rev. Perry, Rev. Birchard, and other leaders present, but did not attend the conference itself. McNaught is National Social Action chairperson for Dignity

● †† The Seattle Gay Community Center suffered a several thousand dollar fire by arson on March 28.

● †† The Connecticut House of Representatives voted down a gay rights bill by a vote of 84 - 62 recently.

● †† After protests and discussions with the National Gay Task Force, the Job Corps has agreed to stop using a manual entitled "Sexual Deviation," containing much anti-gay material.

● †† Governor Milton Shapp of Pennsylvania, who had offered outspoken support of gay rights, has announced his withdrawal from the race for the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination.

● †† Minnesota State Senator Alan Spear, is running for reelection this year, his first election campaign since he publicly revealed his homosexuality. The Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General of Minnesota attended the affair opening his campaign.

● †† San Francisco's newly appointed Police Chief, Charles Gain, has stated that the Police Department will not discriminate (in hiring) against gay people. He was named to the post by Mayor George Moscone, recently elected with the support of the gay community.

● †† Three bills affecting the civil rights of gay people have been introduced into the Massachusetts State Legislature. Two of them were sponsored by Rep. Elaine Noble. One would ban discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations, and credit. The second deals with repealing existing laws regarding private sexual behaviour between consenting adults. The third deals with the state Civil Service Commission.

● †† Roman Catholic Bishop Francis Mugavero called upon the one million parishioners in the diocese of Brooklyn to respect and defend the legitimate rights of gay people.

● †† The first gay rights bill was introduced into the Pennsylvania legislature in March. Eighty gay "lobbyists," wearing the pink triangle symbol (which Nazis forced gays to wear in the concentration camps), spent March 22 in the capitol lobbying for gay rights.

● †† The governor of Oregon has established a Task Force on Sexual Preference to research the type of legislation most appropriate for securing equal rights in that state.

● †† The "gay caucus" of the Quaker yearly meeting is preparing a "lively statement" of purpose and activities. Phil Mullen is Recording Clerk of the Philadelphia group.

● †† A full page article in the April newsletter of the National Gay Task describes in interesting detail the vital role and effectiveness of the West Coast Gay Media Task Force. The Article is written by Dr. Newton Deiter, coordinator of the task force.

● †† Daniel Padnos, pianist of MCC LA, in the April newsletter of the Metropolitan Community Temple reports on his extended visit to Israel and his surprise at seeing the documentary, *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, on TV there. "Imagine," he writes, "Troy, Papa John, The Ward Singers, Spider and Quinn on Israeli TV!"

● †† Father Malcomb Boyd will be keynote speaker for the second annual Integrity Convention, August 6-8 in San Francisco. Father Boyd was recently named an Ingetrity Consultor along with Father Norman Pittenger and Father Robert Cromey.

● †† Bishop Robert Rusack, Episcopal Bishop of Los Angeles, will be celebrant and preacher for Integrity/Los Angeles on April 27th.

● †† James Brown, Bishop-elect of Louisiana, commented recently, "I hope the church will not give in to cultural pressures which now demand that homosexuals be treated the same as heterosexuals."

● †† The Episcopal Diocese of Houston passed a strong anti-gay resolution at their February convention, but the Washington, DC Diocesan convention passed a friendly resolution calling for the Bishop to appoint a Commission to deal with "Homophiles and the Church."

● ††Well known priest author, Father Richard Ginder, now 62, openly gay, on probation on a morals charge, has been stripped of all "priestly faculties" by his bishop in the diocese of Pittsburgh. Father Ginder is author of a recent book, *Binding with Briars: Sex and Sin in the Catholic Church* (Prentice-Hall) which calls for liberalization of the church's teaching on birth control, homosexuality and premarital sex.

● †† A twelve person delegation of gay activists, including MCC members, met on March 19 with Mayor Walter Washington of Washington, DC to discuss issues and problems affecting Washington's Gay Community. Issues included: 1) equal employment opportunities for gays, 2) child custody protection for gay parents, 3) Big Brothers Board membership, 4) gay men's V.D. Clinic appropriation, 5) police relations with the gay community.

● †† The New York Region Lesbian - Feminist Conference will be held in New York City during the weekend of May 22-23. The Conference may be contacted at 420 Dean Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.

● †† The Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare recently released the results of an investigation into the department's foster care placement system. One of the final recommendations of the welfare department report was, "based on findings in the case review, homosexuality per se is not evidence of unsuitability as a foster parent. Individuals should not, therefore, be rejected as foster parents solely because of alleged or self-proclaimed homosexuality."

● †† *Homosexuality: a Gay Bibliography* has been published by the Bowling Green State Universities Libraries, Bowling Green, OH. The Author, Bowling Green senior Dug Funnell from Cleveland, writes in the preface, "To find books on this subject is hard for one just coming out in gay life, and it is mainly for this person that this bibliography is compiled...It was discovered that much has been written on this topic that many people are not aware of." The 48 page bibliography is available from the Bowling Green Library.

INTERVIEW WITH AN EPISCOPAL DEAN

The very Rev. James E. Carroll, Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral in Chicago, granted the *Chicago Gay Life* newspaper an interview which appeared in their April 2, 1976 edition.

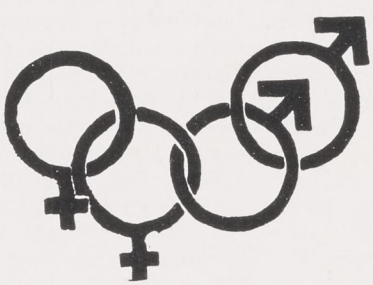
The wisdom of the Dean's comments is impressive.

"I would recommend that homosexuals, as well as heterosexuals, seek to consecrate their sexuality by asking God to purify it for His glory and their salvation. Supression of the sex drive is futile, but . . . channelizing it . . . is essential.

"I'm not prepared to say when a particular homosexual act is a sin . . . until moral throlology itself deals with the homosexual phenomenon in the light of increased insights provided by psychology and the cultural anthropology. Sin is a rebellion aganst the will of God as revealed to us in our Judaeo-Christian heritage and in our conscience.

"The Biblical passages condemning homosexuality most likely came from a natural abhorrence of the pehnomenon on the part of the writers (homophobia is nothing new), but perhaps more deeply from associating homosexual activity with heathan ceremonies. *At any rate*, the Church would be unwise to formulate its moral stance from these scattered parts of the scriptural revelation."

The lengthy story was written by Tom Peters, *Gay Life* Religion Editor.



METHODIST WOMEN'S CAUCUS PREPARES FOR CONFERENCE

The Women's Caucus of the United Methodist Church will make its presence known at the U.M. General Conference by initiating some 20 petitions. The caucus will work for legislation which would establish studies regarding sexism and racism, eliminate sexism and racism from church publications and take other steps insuring the equality of women.

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SAMARITAN BIBLE SCHOOL: now SAMARITAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

Samaritan Bible School, formerly Samaritan Bible Seminary, is now Samaritan Theological Institute. The Board of Elders chose the name at their March meeting from a list of names submitted by the school's Board of Trustees.

Almost simultaneously with its change of name, the MCC educational institution has changed its location. The school, since its inception housed in the facilities of the MCC Los Angeles, has now moved to separate larger quarters in a downtown Los Angeles office building.

Samaritan Theological Institute is now located at 318 West Ninth Street, occupying a sixth floor suite providing space for classrooms, an expanding library, as well as spacious offices and reception area. In making the announcement of the move, Samaritan's President, Rev. Elder Richard Vincent, said the trustees of Samaritan decided to make the move so that the school could establish its own identity as an educational institution for the entire Fellowship and expand its programs and class offerings.

A statement signed by the Board of Trustees explains the rationale of the name change. "We are excited about our new name, Samaritan Theological Institute, because it more accurately describes us and it gives us more flexibility. We describe our educational institution as 'Theological' because this is a more inclusive term. We still, of course, teach Biblical studies and all of our courses are Biblically-based, but we do not want to give the impression that all we teach is Bible. We also offer courses in church history, ethics, Christian theology and doctrines, UFMCC polity and programs, and practics (preaching, worship, administration, education, counseling, etc.). We are trying to prepare our students to become good ministers (both lay and professional) in MCC. 'Theological' is an inclusive, broad term which means the study of God and God's dealings wih humankind. We believe that God's dealings with the world did not stop when the canon of the Bible was closed. We affirm that God is still speaking and acting in our midst today.

The word 'Institute' was chosen rather than 'School' because it gives us more flexibility. We do offer formal classes and correspondence courses and we will continue to do so, but we also want to offer weekend symposiums and workshops here in Los Angeles and around our Fellowship at local churches, District Conferences, and General Conferences. We also want to sponsor research projects. 'Institute' is a more accurate name for these educational activities and it allows Samaritan to develop along new lines.

The Spring Quarter of classes for Samaritan Theological Institute started March 8, with 29 students enrolled, 19 men and 10 women. The courses offered this spring are 'Modern Sects' taught by the Rev. James Sandmire; 'Practice of Preaching' taught by Ms. Karen Wheeler, Dean; and 'Epistles of Paul' taught by the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling.

Samaritan's new downtown location

On the Friday prior to the beginning of Spring classes Samaritan had an entire evening program at MCC in the Valley in North Hollywood. The evening included registration for Spring Quarter classes, an all-school meeting (students, faculty, and trustees), a student body meeting, and an all-school party. That weekend, March 6 and 7, the move was made from MCC-LA to Samaritan's new facilities, and it was completed in time for the first class of the quarter, Monday evening, March 8.

With the new home and new name settled, everyone involved in Samaritan is proceeding with other business: The trustees with public relations, fundraising, and building improvements: The faculty with revising the curriculum, and the students with putting together a student journal. All three groups are working together to make Samaritan Sunday, May 2, a success this year by assisting with mailings and speaking at various MCC churches. MCC Los Angeles, for many years the host church for the school, will feature several Samaritan students for their Samaritan Sunday service. Three students, Ms. Lucia Chappelle, Mr. Ted Richmond, and Ms. Angie Umbertino, will give sermonettes that day.

The Elders have designated May 2 as Samaritan Sunday throughout the Fellowship. Each MCC Congregation is asked to receive a special offering that Sunday for the continued work and growth of Samaritan Theological Institute.

In addition to Rev. Vincent, President, trustees of the Institute are: Rev. Richard Ploen, Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Ms. Karen Wheeler and Ms. Jeri Slifer.

The mailing address of the school remains the same: P.O. Box 36277, Los Angeles, California 90036. To assure reliable delivery, mail should NOT be sent to the street address. ●

REVEREND KEN TAYLOR LICENSED in ENGLAND

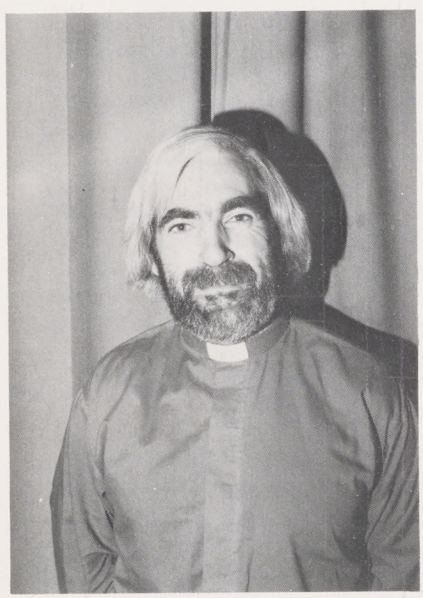
The Rev. Ken Taylor was recently licensed by the Board of Elders as the first MCC Minister to be licensed in the United Kingdom. Rev. Tom Bigelow, Coordinator of Church Extension in the United Kingdom, sent IN UNITY a photo of Rev. Taylor, along with an autobiography.

I was born in a small village in Leicestershire, close to Charnwood Forest, not unknown territory to Robin Hood and his Merry Men, when seeking refuge from the Sheriff of Nottingham.

However, adventure for me was to be found at sea. Whilst my school friends trained to be engineers and office clerks, I left home to train to be a radio operator in the Royal Navy. It was whilst at the Naval Training School that I first met with Christ. I was simply asked if I would like to go to a Bible Study and prayer

meeting, and unable to think of any excuse as to why I shouldn't go, I went along, believing myself to be a Christian anyway. I don't remember what the leader said now, nor any of the comments made by the other participants, but I knew Jesus didn't mean the same to me as he did to those at that meeting. Very soon afterwards I allowed Jesus to come into my life.

In the following year I joined my first operational ship, H.M.S. Hogue, a battle class destroyer. She was Commissioned for Home-East of Suez duties with the promise of a visit to Australia. At sea, my only fellowship with other Christians was simply waving a Bible to a fellow Christian as his



The Reverend Ken Taylor

ship came along-side for re-fueling or taking on stores. In harbor, I organized a Squadron Bible Study onboard one of the destroyers.

However, that didn't last for long. We passed through the Suez Canal and into the Red Sea. I was invited to the Bridge to see Mount Sinai and the Wilderness and after numerous ports of call, we arrived in Ceylon. Shortly after leaving Ceylon, Hogue came into collision with I.N.S. Mysore, the Flagship of the Indian Navy, and formerly a British cruiser. In that accident, I found myself trapped from the waist down and unable to move, and slowly dying. One man was already dead and two others were seriously injured. Eventually I was taken onboard an awaiting aircraft carrier. After a night of hard work by the surgeons, and an all-night prayer meeting in the ships Chapel by members of the ship's Christian fellowship, I was flown to a Royal Air Force Hospital in Ceylon to await a military aircraft to fly me to England. Word of my arrival had gone ahead of me, and I was welcomed at the door of the English hospital by a young Christan National Serviceman, who has since entered the Baptist Ministry.

For the next two years, I remained in Royal Air Force hospitals. I lost part of my right leg after an eight-month fight to try and save it. It was a time of very rich blessing.

I left the hospital, walking unaided, for All Nations Bible College, to study for the college's diploma. And, after three years study, became involved with the Free Church of England. But, I found after awhile, their ultra-Protestant stand provided too negative a ministry. I returned to the Church of England and was licensed as a lay-reader to a country parish in the Diocese of Leicester. There I worked for about seven years, also working part-time in the Accounts Department of Riker Laboratories.

Itching to get back to the Royal Navy, I joined the Church Army, an Evangelistic Society within the Church of England, one of whose commitments is to supply officers to the Navy to work as Assistant Chaplains. I was appointed to one of its hospitals. It was there that I first heard of the Fellowship of Christ the Liberator, later to become M.C.C. London. I introduced myself to the Fellowship, and after a time was invited to help with the taking of Services, there being no Pastor then. I soon found M.C.C. London becoming my spiritual home.

In July, last year, I left the Navy to take up an appointment in the Prison Service, based in London. This move has brought me closer to M.C.C., not only geographically, but given me the opportunity, especially on Sundays, to take a full share of its ministry.

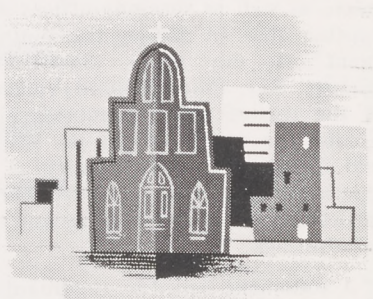
Though our numbers are small, and the building not exactly what I am used to, let me use the words of my partner, Eddie, on the first occasion he came to a service: "That is what I call a Cathedral." •

MCC Nashville Grows

by Steve LaFever - Worship Coordinator

About 4 years ago, a young man named Terry Whitwell traveled to Atlanta, GA., and attended MCC Atlanta. There he met John Gill and was very impressed...Needless to say, he thought that this important ministry would be well received in Nashville, TN. So he returned and MCC Nashville was born.

Articles were written by the local papers: "Homosexuals Have Their Own Church." And ads were placed in the local papers. It was suggested these ads be placed in the entertainment section...however, they were finally placed in the religion section. Nashville is looking forward to eventually being chartered in UFMCC.



Nashville is having an average attendance of 40 with over 200 people on the rolls.

There are many straight people involved with the church as well as many women. There are currently five ordained ministers attending from other denominations who are actively involved with the life of the mission.

Nashville has had many interesting activities and fund-raising events. There are many talented people involved and many available resources. Nashville is the home of the Methodist Church, Southern Baptist Convention, Trevecca Nazarene College, Free Will Baptist College, and Scarritt Methodist College, and the headquarters for other denominations.

In March, MCC Nashville hosted the United Methodist Gay Caucus. This was the first time that MCC and another denomination worked so closely on a project. It was a valuable experience

both for the Methodists and for MCC. One member of the caucus (Rev. Rick Huskey) came back and preached for us.

I guess MCC Nashville sounds like a veritable paradise. Well - not so - Nashville has it's problems also. I would say that most of the problems are GROWING PAINS.

It would be helpful to the growth of the mission if pastors and members of other MCC's could stop by from time to time and share experiences with us...You see, MCC Nashville is a good five hour drive from the nearest other MCC.

Despite the pains, growth is still taking place. The average attendance is rising monthly and the people are becoming very stable. MCC Nashville is growing and learning and becoming!

NEW ZEALAND MCC APPEALS FOR NEWSLETTERS

MCC Auckland, New Zealand has sent out an urgent appeal to all church groups everywhere to share with them their local newsletter. "They provide much spiritual inspiration and material that we here in this far-flung outpost of MCC crave for. We look forward to news from our fellow MCC groups."

The address is MCC Auckland, C.P.O. Box 3897, Auckland, New Zealand.

NOT IN SERVICE. . .

"Not in service." Waiting somewhat impatiently for a city bus the other day, we were relieved to see one approaching. Then, as it drew near, we sighed in disappointment. The sign read, "Not in service." We just had to wait for the next one, while the driver, even though going our way, refused to stop, and presumably took his vehicle back to a garage.

Sometimes we encounter the same situation in our churches. An able layman or woman appears, evidently able to do some task on behalf of the church, such as teaching, singing in the choir, but when we ask for some service, there is an excuse. Maybe some church people ought to wear signs for all to see, that so far as voluntary assistance for the church is concerned, they are just "not in service." —Sel.

ACTION IN ADELAIDE

The first MCC service of Holy Matrimony in Australia was celebrated by the Rev. Stan Harris, Pastor of MCC Adelaide, South Australia, on March 13, 1976.

The marriage between Ms. Joline Ouwens and Mr. Bryan Tingey was celebrated in the garden of Ms. Ouwens parents' home, at Taperoo, a suburb of Adelaide. A second marriage ceremony was celebrated the following afternoon at Ingle Farm in the garden of the home of Ms. Elizabeth Colter and Mr. Jean Burracand. Rev. Harris writes, "Both couples are sympathetic to MCC Ministry. Both commented on the simplicity and beauty of the ceremony."

In Autumn, about mid-May, MCC will open the first gay community center in South Australia, the first state in the country to pass a consenting adult law.

The Church has leased a facility in the city that has two wings. One side will be used for worship and social gatherings and will seat 100 persons. (Studies by staticians predict a maximum attendance of 100 at any given time, based on the gay population of the area.) The other side will house the MCC bookstore where they will sell IN UNITY, other publications, and their own locally produced MCC crosses. It will also house the church office, a coffee shop, a meeting room, and a counseling room. "This is phase one," writes Pastor Harris.

It is the hope of MCC Adelaide to buy this building in the future along with two adjoining properties. "This is pretty ambitious, considering our present bank account," Pastor Harris said. But they have faith in the future of MCC Adelaide.

Also in March Australia's first Minister's Conference was held in Adelaide. It was attended by all the licensed clergy and trainee ministers. Rev. Lee Carlton, Coordinator of Church Extension in Australasia, chaired the Conference. It was described by Rev. Harris as "a great time of spiritual renewal and mutual support."

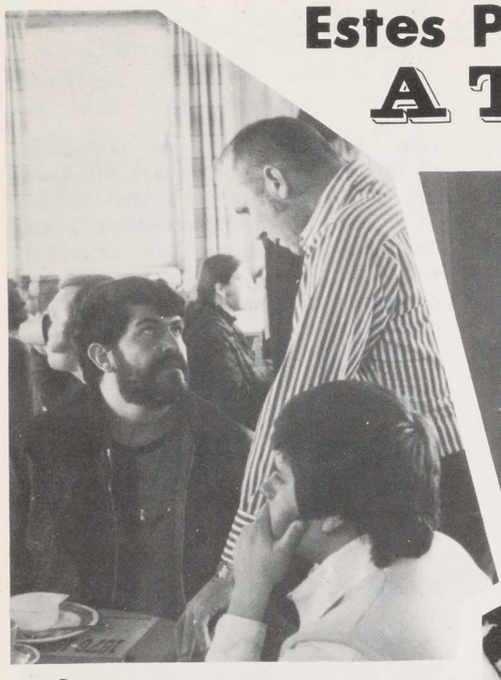
Transexual sister, Renee Hein, a licensed exhorter, made her home available for the conference and "did a wonderful job as hostess."

GOOD SHEPHERD CHOIR WILL SING IN D.C.

The Choir of Good Shepherd Parish, Metropolitan Community Church of Chicago, IL, will be in Washington, DC for General Conference and Affirmation '76 this August 10 - 15. Mr. Ron Froemming is the Choir Director; Mr. Jim Thomas, organist; Mr. Barry Wiener, pianist. - Lyndoli photo

Estes Park...
A TIME OF SHARING

by Rev. Tom Taylor



Sexual Attitude Reassessment (SAR) ... the words popped into my mind without my conscious bidding. What was it going to be like, this SAR? Was it necessary? Would it help me in my ministry or would it tear down my confidence in my own sexuality hammered out over the past 41 years?

The SAR program conducted by the Akron Forum for the Study of Human Sexuality began after lunch. Dr. Richard L. Bennett, MD, and his lover, Thomas Gertz, administrative director of SAR, conducted the program. Toni Ayers, a member of the National Sex Forum in San Francisco assisted, along with other members of the Akron Staff.

It began. Films, sexually explicit, were shown on a makeshift screen. Small discussion groups followed as we all learned to share and explore our own sexual attitudes. It was, at least for me, a time to become more aware of myself and my own sexual hangups, and being aware, correct them.

The films, although explicit, were not pornographic. They dealt with the different ways people relate to each other physically – the many ways we can express our love.

There were slides and clinical discussions on anatomy. It was a class on human sexuality I wish I had had when I was in school. It might have saved me from the many scars I received over the years.

One film, *Lavender*, in particular hit a chord with both Woody and me. Two sisters sharing with us on film their love for each other. This film went beyond the sexual explicit. The two women discussed their total relationship. How they met, how they came to love each other, and how they shared their lives.

"Wow," I thought. "That's how I feel about Woody." I looked up, and even in the dark, I caught his eye. "He's feeling the same thing," I thought. I reached out and touched his hand.

At that moment, I knew the trip had been necessary, had been worthwhile. The program, at least for me, had brought it all together.

It had taken me 41 years to relax with being me. It had taken 41 years to overcome the repressions and the fears. It had taken many hours of hurt, loneliness, and wasted time searching for the fleeting touch of a human hand.

The program, at least for me, put all that in perspective. I left Estes Park secure in my own sexuality, something I had not totally been before. I left Estes Park, closer to my sisters than ever before, because I now had a little understanding of their needs, their hurt, and their loneliness. I was also closer to my brothers, because of the strengthening inner security.

It will be many days before I'm going to be able to totally absorb the full impact of those two days. I'm content to know that I am a better person for having participated. I will now be better able to help, because of a better understanding of myself. ●

GOD'S PEOPLE ===
Continued from page 2

laws because there is no body of federal legislation that sets precedents prohibiting such legal violations of the privacy of an adult's sex life. It is time that we urged our Congresspeople and Senators to pass such legislation now.

It is instructive to compare this Supreme Court ruling with another ruling that was a landmark setback in civil rights jurisprudence. The Dred Scott decision was the last Supreme Court decision detrimental to black people before the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation. The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches looks forward to the time of the emancipation and freedom of gay people.

We in the gay community are fortunate that the weekend before the Supreme Court handed down its decision, a group of 65 gay leaders met in Chicago, Illinois, at the invitation of Advocate owner-publisher David Goodstein, to discuss the fulfillment of a dream a lot of us have had for a long time -- that being seeing a lobbyist effort in Washington D.C. to change America's laws. (I am aware of the controversy surrounding the meeting. You can read about it in your local gay press. However, after the dust settled, good things happened.) An organization, the Gay Rights National Lobby, Inc., has been formed in Washington D.C. The sole purpose of GRNL is to raise money to hire two lobbyists to work full time to bring about change in the American Federal Congress. If you feel this is a worthy cause, I encourage you to join GRNL. You may secure full information about this group by writing GRNL, Inc., c/o Adam DeBaugh, 110 Maryland Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002.

I believe that most of you share the same views I do; that Jesus Christ came to change the world and that we who bear His name must strive to follow in His steps and do our part to try to bring to pass the changes He intended while He lived on this earth.

We, as Christians, must not ever give to any earthly government, the right or power, to regulate our existence. We must join with the early church, when they were told they could not be what they were emphatically stating once again, "We must obey God, not people." Acts 5:29

(I want to thank Rev. Roy Birchard and Adam DeBaugh of the UFMCC Washington DC office for preparing the Fellowship position paper on the Supreme Court decision.) •

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